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IN RUSSIAN TURKESTAN


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THE AUTHOR IN SART DRESS

(Showing Tashkent embroidery and a Turkoman rug in the background)

IN

RUSSIAN TURKESTAN

A GARDEN OF ASIA AND ITS PEOPLE

65974

BY

ANNETTE M. B. MEAKIN

AUTHOR OF "A RIBBON OF IRON"

FELLOW OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, ETC.

"The most savage dominion has not extirpated the seeds of agriculture and commerce, in a region which is celebrated as one of the four gardens of Asia."—GIBBON.

WITH 16 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

BOM... ERA... OF...

LONDON

GEORGE ALLEN, 156, CHARING CROSS ROAD

1903

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TO

HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY

ALEXANDRA FEODOROVNA

EMPRESS OF ALL THE RUSSIAS

THIS PEN AND INK SKETCH OF

HER GARDEN IN ASIA

IS RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

DEDICATED

PREFACE

"Tell me, ye learned, shall we for ever be adding so much to the bulk—so little to the stock?

"Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel into another?"

—STERNE.

THIS volume is not intended to be a compendium of all the information that has been contributed by previous writers on Turkestan. Had it been so it would necessarily have swelled into thrice its present size. It is simply the result of two visits to the country made for purposes of personal observation. Other writers have occasionally been quoted, such as Vambéry, Schuyler, Schwarz and Nalivkin; but all these and many more must be carefully read by those who wish to gain a complete knowledge of Russian Central Asia, especially if they wish to trace its progress towards civilisation during the last thirty or forty years. Some have thought it necessary to devote chapters to a description of all the Mohammedan rites and ceremonies of the Sarts, Turkomans and Kirgiz. I have chosen rather to describe a few of those in which Islam in Central Asia differs somewhat from Islam in other countries. Two years spent among Mohammedans in Morocco, added to travels among the Tatárs, in

Kazan, the Crimea and Northern Siberia, the Arabs in Egypt and the Turks in Constantinople and Palestine, have been my chief preparation for the task. Its accomplishment is due to the kindness of his Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia, who, at the instance of his Excellency Prince Hilkoff, Minister of Ways and Communications, graciously granted me special facilities for travelling in his Central Asian dominions. It would be impossible for me to say how much I owe to the kindness of his Excellency M. Ivanoff, the Governor-General at Tashkent, who provided me with an open letter to officials in every part of his territory, and to that of Colonel Horvat, Chief of the Central Asian railways at Askhabad, who placed a luxuriously fitted-up governor's carriage entirely at my disposal for the whole of my stay, which would have covered a much longer period had not circumstances beyond my control compelled me to return to England early in March 1902.

To my other Russian friends, and especially to the ladies who one and all received my mother and myself with such warm hospitality, and who on many occasions accompanied us to the native houses and acted as our interpreters, I also owe far more than I can possibly express.

A. M. B. M.

IONA, *August* 29, 1903.

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PART I

THE LAND OF TAMERLANE

IN RUSSIAN TURKESTAN

CHAPTER I

THE SARTS

"The individuals at the extremes of divergence in one race of men are as unlike as the wolf to the lapdog. Yet each variety shades down imperceptibly into the next, and you cannot draw the line where a race begins or ends."—EMERSON.

AS early as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Russia was connected by commerce with the people of Central Asia. Khiva and Bokhara sent their caravans across her steppes to Moscow and Novgorod long before she had risen to the rank of a European power, but it was not until 1867 that Russian troops made their way from Siberia to Tashkent and took possession of the province of which that town is now the capital. On the 11th of June in that year the General Government of Turkestan came into existence. Seventeen years later, on the 16th of March 1884, Transcaspia, the home of the Turkomans, also became Russian ground, and to-day a Governor-General appointed by the Czar, and holding a position equivalent to that of

Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener rolled into one, watches over the interests of a territory that stretches from the shores of the Caspian to the Chinese border. Some day he will be called a Viceroy.

The story of Russia's advance into Asia has been told many times. After the taking of Merv the country was at last safe for travellers, and the power of the Turkomans was broken. Brigands of the fiercest type, these wild people had blocked for centuries all entrance to Central Asia by way of the Caspian. But even when the Russians built their military railway they did not throw the new route open to the public, and to-day no traveller may use it without a permit from St. Petersburg. Hence it comes that we have so few books on the country, and know so little about it. The names and the fate of the few travellers who succeeded in reaching Bokhara and Samarkand in the first half of the nineteenth century are known to us all. The two English officers, Stoddard and Konolly, who penetrated to Bokhara from India, were thrown from the top of the criminal tower in that city. Schlagintweit, an Austrian, was put to death in Kashgar, while the more fortunate Vambéry, who travelled in the disguise of a dervish, returned in safety to Hungary, where he still enjoys the well-earned reputation of being the greatest authority on the people of Central Asia.[1]

[1] For the fate of Wolfe see Norman's "All the Russias."

Russian Turkestan is peopled partly by a sedentary race called Sarts and partly by nomads, with an ever-increasing number of foreigners from European Russia, who live in distinct towns of their own, just as the English do in India. Wherever there is a Sart town of any importance, one finds close to it, and bearing the same name, a thriving Russian colony, which has its own church, its own clubs and schools, and its own public gardens.

After Tashkent the chief Sart towns are Samarkand, Kokand, Margelan, Andijan, Namangan and Chyust, though perhaps it is hardly correct to class Andijan among the rest without adding the lamentable fact that it was almost completely destroyed by a terrible earthquake in December 1902. Bokhara, of ancient fame, may also be classed as a Sart town; it grows every year more like its above-mentioned neighbours, though the Khanate of which it is the capital has still an Amir of its own, and, like Khiva, can boast of an apparent independence.

The Sarts are a mixture of the Indo-Germanic race—the earliest inhabitants of Turkestan—with every other race that during the last two thousand years has conquered and dwelt in the land. To use a homely simile, their country is like a sieve through which many varieties of the humankind have passed. Take out the residue, boil it all up together, and you have a new race—the Sarts. In

some towns the boiling process has been very thorough, while in others it has been less so. Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Chinese, Huns, Mongols, Kirgiz and Uzbegs all have passed through the sieve, besides many more with whose names we are less familiar.

The Arabs left behind them the Koran, and consequently much of their language. In Margelan there are still a few families who call their movable dwellings *arabes*, and who trace their genealogies back to the Arab conquerors. A certain village in Fergana still bears an Arab name, which is accounted for by a legend that the enemy surprised a party of Arabs by night, just as they had halted and lit their fires in preparation for supper. The cook, in his trepidation, fell into the flames and was burned to death, whereupon his supperless and sorrowing friends called the spot *Kuryug Mezar* ("the place of burning") in his memory.

Every traveller who has attempted to describe the Sarts has mentioned the strong Mongolian element that betrays itself so unmistakably in their physiognomy, but no Sart will ever tell you that he is of Mongol origin. When you put the question, as I have put it scores of times, "What is your nationality?" the answer is invariably, "I am an Uzbeg," or "I am a Tajik." According to native histories the Mongols were one of the ninety

and odd tribes into which the hordes of Ghengis Khan were divided, while the term Uzbeg is applied collectively to those tribes who owned allegiance to the four sons of Ghengis.

The Uzbegs were the last ingredient to be poured through our sieve; that is to say, they were the last conquerors of the land. They gave the Sarts their language—Turki—and it is from their rulers that the reigning Amirs of Khiva and Bokhara are descended. Some of the Uzbegs have abandoned their nomadic life and become entirely sedentary, others have partially abandoned it, while others again have remained nomads in the full sense of the term. All of them, except the first named and the Kipchaks and the Karakalpaks, are distinguished by the Russians as Kirgiz.

M. Nalivkin, who has studied the subject carefully during his long residence among the Sarts, is opposed to the prevailing opinion that the term "Sart" is one of contempt given by the nomadic Uzbegs to their sedentary brethren; he affirms that there is now in existence a tribe of that very name. He has met not unfrequently with the name of "Sart-Bey" in Kirgiz families. "I own," he writes, "that the Kirgiz often give strange names to their children, but they never give names conveying an idea of contempt. The probability is that the first tribe from the hordes of Ghengis that gave up its roving life was one bearing the name of Sart."

Until the Uzbegs came the Persian element had predominated in many of the towns, and the Sart who tells you he is a Tajik is one whose family, not having mixed with the conquering Uzbegs, has retained, more or less, the Persian tongue and type. A learned Sart in Margelan told me that the earliest inhabitants of Fergana were fire-worshippers, people called "Tojeliks," because their king wore a crown and was known as "Tajik." He also asserted that the word "Sart" meant "stout and round," and that the term *had* been first used by the Kirgiz to distinguish the sedentary population from themselves. Another native sage whom I visited in Andijan fetched out two great books when I questioned him about the history of his race, and translated for my benefit certain passages which it took him a long time to find. They were to the effect that Andijan was the first Sart town, and that the eldest son of Ghengis Khan had settled there with his followers. He turned over the leaves of the smaller of the two volumes with particular reverence. "This book," he said, "was written by a wise man who was chief of this very town three hundred years ago. India belonged to him before the English took it. He wrote his own life, and when he died he was buried in Kabul. His name was Bábar Khan."[1] Yet M. Nalivkin

[1] Bábar in exile founded a grandiose empire, but Bábar in the home of his forefathers was but a little prince among many rivals. —"*Bábar*," *by Stanley Lane-Poole.*

writes that Sultan Bábar is hardly known by name to the Sarts. He showed his writings to some of the most learned natives in Fergana, and found that they had never even heard of them. "Bábar," he writes, "is in bad repute in Fergana; there is only one legend there about him. One day a voice was heard from Heaven saying, 'Kill the Khan Bábar, kill him, kill him.' So the people fell upon him and killed him."

Some writers speak of the Tajiks as being in every way a superior type of humanity to the Uzbegs, but my own experience and the opinions expressed to me by Russians living amongst them have inclined me to the opposite opinion. In such towns as Bokhara and Samarkand, where the two live side by side, the Uzbeg is found to be the more intelligent, the more active, and the more pleasant to deal with. The Tajik is apt to be slinking and cowardly, and ready to fawn upon a dreaded foe; while the Uzbeg, though outwardly of a rougher cast, has a touch of real chivalry in his character. I remember hearing a Russian say that it was the preponderance of Tajik blood in Bokhara which led that Khanate to submit to the Czar without a struggle, whereas it was the Uzbegs of Kokand who resisted so stoutly. Having heard much about the fanaticism of the Bokharans, I asked a Russian in Bokhara whether his government distrusted the Amir.

"Can you distrust your own pocket-handkerchief?" was the quick reply.

The Tajik carries the palm for good looks, at least according to our ideas of beauty. He has the dark, expressive eye and the regular features of his Persian ancestors. He decks himself out in bright colours that enhance his comeliness, and the result is that travellers are much more favourably impressed by his appearance than by that of his neighbour the Uzbeg, who is content to dress in more sombre robes, and whose Mongol eyes and high cheek-bones are far less attractive, though, strange to say, the pure Uzbeg type is more noticeable in the women than in the men.

CHAPTER II

WHERE WATER IS PRECIOUS

"Drop upon drop makes a sea; if there are no drops there is a desert."—*Sart Proverb.*

THE chief occupation of the sedentary population in Turkestan is agriculture, and it is on the produce of their fields and gardens that they mainly subsist. The inhabited parts of the country are separated from one another by great stretches of desert, where one may travel for days without seeing a tree or meeting a human being. These oases, that seem to float like islands on a sea of sand, are as thickly populated as any corner of God's earth, and the soil of Paradise could not have been more fruitful than theirs. The man who sows his sack of wheat or rice, or millet, is sure of his forty-fold, his hundred-fold, or even his three hundred-fold return; while the rapidity with which trees grow is almost incredible. Everything that is planted flourishes in profusion, provided there is plenty of water, and there *is* plenty in the cultivable land, but every drop has been brought by artificial means, and where there are no canals there is desert. Thus it comes about that for the smallest strip of

watered land such an enormous price is asked, that a poor man can never purchase any. Rain, there is none to speak of in the plains; none ever falls in summer, and very little in winter. During three months, from November to the middle of February, I spent a good part of each day out of doors, but never once opened an umbrella.

There is nothing more remarkable in the whole of Turkestan than its wonderful system of canals—a system that must have been handed down from the earliest inhabitants, for without canals nothing could ever have grown. Traces of ancient canals in what is now unreclaimed desert have convinced archæologists that in many parts where there is now no human habitation there were once rich and populous cities. A soil possessing so many of the properties of the finest clay is especially suited to the construction of canals, for with a little water it is easily worked; and once baked by the Central Asian sun, it is impervious to water as any such substance could be, and canal walls need not be of any very great thickness to ensure the waters not breaking through.

"But how," we naturally ask, "does a Sart manage without those instruments which to European engineers would be essential?"

The answer is simple: where we should use a level, a Sart uses his eye. If he wants to know whether a canal can be carried to a certain part of

his field, he throws himself on his back, and with his chin in the air, looks over his forehead towards the point in question. If he can see it with his head in that position he knows that the water will flow to it. The cleverest of European engineers have failed in their attempts to bring water to spots that to this day bear the traces of a perfect network of ancient canals. Topographers say that in some cases the cause of their failure lies in the fact that the level of some of the rivers has altered and that the engineers did not take that alteration into account.

The province of Samarkand is watered entirely by the Zarafshan (the Polytimetus of the Ancients), and should that river dry up, Samarkand would cease to exist. The same may be said about the province of Syr Daria, which is watered by the river Syr Daria, formerly known as the Jaxartes. The Zarafshan rises in a gigantic glacier of that name, situated in the same longitude as Peshawar, and about as far, in a south-easterly direction, from Samarkand as Berwick is from London. The glacier is eighteen miles wide, and its foot is 9000 feet above sea-level. The river rushes for many miles in a narrow ravine between two mountain chains, that of the Turkestan range on the north and that of the Zarafshan range on the south. When it emerges at last into the open country, it is joined by a small affluent, the Iskander, so named after

Alexander the Great. Every drop of water in the river is speedily utilised for fertilising the land. A plan of the canals into which it flows reminds one of a skeleton laurel leaf. Rows of wide canals spring from either side of the river and run in almost parallel lines; from these again spring narrower ones, and so the network is continued till every drop of water has been used up. In order that no landowner may get more than his fair share of water, the canals nearest to the source of the river are closed periodically, when sufficient water has flowed down them. As there are no proper dykes, the work of closing canals is extremely arduous; it is accomplished by means of hard manual labour. Heavy stones are heaped together and kept in place with branches of trees. The strongest of these primitive dykes would not last three years.

It has been estimated that 12,000 cubic feet of water a minute are needed to water the province of Samarkand. Bokhara needs 6000, so the total required is 18,000 cubic feet a minute. Now the actual supply of water in spring is never more than 6000 cubic feet, so it is only by portioning it out with the greatest care that the Sarts can get enough moisture for the land. Between the source of the river and Bokhara there are no less than ninety wide canals, not to speak of the vast network of narrower ones between. By the time it reaches Bokhara the Zarafshan entirely loses its identity,

and canals are all that is left of that river. It has been suggested by Russian engineers that if reservoirs were to be cut in the mountain sides close to the Zarafshan Glacier, they could be supplied from the overflowing water of the river at the time of the spring rains, and that in summer, when the river showed signs of exhaustion, the water thus collected could be allowed to flow back to it; but such enormous sums of money would be needed to carry out the plan, that there is no immediate likelihood of its being undertaken. Should all attempts to improve the water-supply of Bokhara fail, we may look upon her fate as sealed. This is not the place to give a detailed account of all the rivers by which Turkestan is watered. I have merely chosen the story of the Zarafshan to show how precious water is to the land. When in Tschust, we were handsomely entertained by the wealthiest Sart in the town, and hearing much of his affluence from our Russian friends, I asked how he had come by his riches.

"He is an *Aryk Aksakal*," was the reply. "It is his duty to see that the canals in this district are properly worked, and when the people quarrel over the water it is he who settles the disputes. Half the fights and murders that take place arise from one man thinking another has taken more than his share of water."

"But how does his position come to be such a

lucrative one?" I asked. "Does he receive a very high salary for his services?"

"He receives no regular salary," was the answer. "To ensure his making the most of the water, the Russian Government pays him in proportion to the results of each year's harvest, but that is not how he makes his money."

"How then does he make it?" I inquired.

It is a case of "Brüderchen, gieb mir noch ein Viertelstündchen,"[1] was the reply. "The water is allowed to run into each man's canal or canals for so many minutes, according to the extent of his land. Now in hot weather a man who is keen about his crops, and thinks they are not getting enough, goes to the *Aryk Aksakal* and bribes him to let the water run into his canal for a longer period. That is how our friend fills his pockets."

On further inquiries I learned that the Government had at one time tried the experiment of doing away with the post of *Aryk Aksakal* and putting the management of the canals in Russian hands, but it was soon found that with all their ignorance and want of technical skill, the natives, in simply following the custom of their forefathers, were invariably rewarded with success, while Russian efforts to understand the wants of the soil were a miserable failure.

If a man is cultivating rice or anything else that

[1] Little brother, give me one more little quarter of an hour.

needs covering with water, he divides his field into small squares and surrounds each of them with a low mud wall. The level of the first square is a little higher than that of the second, and so on. Water is let into the highest first, and when that has been sufficiently flooded a hole in the wall empties the water into the next square. The mud that collects in the canals is cleared out every spring; it is not carried away but heaped up on the sides, with the result that they grow deeper and deeper every year.

CHAPTER III

TREES AND FRUITS

IN a country where the sky is blue even in the depth of winter, and where in the middle of December the sun is often oppressively hot, it is a surprise to find that not an orange or a lemon or an olive tree is to be seen. On account of its mild and exhilarating winter climate Turkestan has been called "the Riviera of the future," and yet not a single palm or cypress or myrtle is found. Turkestan has, however, one tree quite peculiar to itself, the *kara agatch* or "black tree," called by Europeans *Ulmus Turkestanica*. Its branches, covered in summer with dark green leaves, spring out in a bunch from the stem; seen from a distance its shape is that of a balloon, and to the European eye extremely ugly, but the Sarts admire its strange form and, on account of its beauty and the grateful shade afforded by its leaves, are fond of planting it round their reservoirs and in places where they sit and stroll in summer. The Russians say that it harbours mosquitoes in its thick foliage, and that these in their turn help to spread disease. The wood of the *kara agatch* is

employed in carving, for which use it is well fitted; being very heavy and hard, it also looks well when polished.

The poplar grows to great perfection—it is the tree of all others that is connected in my mind with Russian Central Asia. The streets of every Russian town are lined with poplars; two kinds in particular attracted my attention. In Tashkent, Namangan, Margelan, and Kokand the kind most frequently met with is like our own common poplar, except that it grows more rapidly and to a far greater height. While walking in the Russian park at Margelan a lady astonished me by observing that every one of the trees there had been planted within the last fifteen years; in Europe a poplar would hardly reach that height in thirty years. There is a spreading poplar in Samarkand, the *Populus diversifolia*, our silver poplar, whose far-reaching branches meet across the wide European roads, and hide the houses so completely that in summer one almost forgets one is in a town. Owing to the peculiarities of the climate too much shade from trees is considered unhealthy, and numbers of men are constantly employed in cutting away the superfluous branches of trees which the Russians themselves have planted. The wood of the poplar is too soft for building purposes, owing to the rapidity of its growth. Where the Russian plants a poplar the Sart prefers to plant a willow,

of which tree there are at least four kinds. Native towns and villages are full of them, they line the canals and hang over garden walls, they form hedges to the fields, and are an indispensable feature of every Sart landscape.

In the province of Bokhara, the tree that grows to greatest perfection is the plane-tree. The Sarts have a veneration for the plane; they often place it, in preference to any other tree, in front of their mosques, and the native traveller takes it for granted that all he comes across have been planted by holy men. Some of the largest have trunks equal in circumference to those of the giant trees of California, and grow to an immense height.

The *saxaul* (*Haloxylon ammodendron*) is perhaps the most remarkable of all the trees that grow in Central Asia. It is found in the moving sands of the desert, thriving, apparently without any water. I was at first under the impression, like many Russians who live in the vicinity, that it never bore any foliage, but the fact is its leaves are so small that they can hardly be seen with the naked eye. Its trunk and branches are much knotted. The nomads find it useful for firewood, besides which it helps with its long roots to hold the shifting sands together, and is for this reason planted by the Russians along their railway lines. Its wood is so heavy that it cannot be made to float

upon water, even when all the sap has been dried out of it. Russian river steamers burn it as fuel, as it gives out twice the heat of ordinary coal. The growth of the *saxaul* is so slow that it is hardly perceptible. The natives say that to reach its full size it must grow for a hundred years. Some Frenchmen have been trying to acclimatise it in the Sahara, but with what result I do not know.

Neither fir-trees nor pines are to be found in the plains, but they thrive in the mountains to the north of Namangan, at a height of nearly 3000 feet above sea-level. We happened to be in Russian Namangan just before Christmas, and met one day a troop of Sarts, each carrying a tall Christmas-tree. I counted twenty-five. Colonel Jesson, the chief of the district, which by the way is as large as Holland, noticing my surprise, explained that the trees had been brought from the mountains for Christmas, and that twenty-five Russian families were eagerly looking out for them in Kokand, to which town they were now going. This explanation was plausible enough, but it seemed strange nevertheless to see Mohammedans carrying Christmas-trees. Yet the custom of having them is supposed by some writers to have been brought to Germany by the Indo-Germanic races, whose first home was in Turkestan. It is, of course, well known that the custom is a recent one in Russia, the Slavs

having borrowed it from their German neighbours. Whatever degree of truth there may be in the above theory, the Sarts certainly have a reverence for some trees, which they show by tearing strips off their clothes and hanging them on the branches. The appearance of these holy trees struck me as particularly gruesome, especially in winter, when there were no leaves to hide the rags that fluttered in the breeze. When a Sart woman is anxious to have a son, her first act is to contribute such a rag. While walking up the steps of the Schah Zindah mosque in Samarkand, my Mohammedan guide pointed out to me a tree, the fruit of which, he said, was eagerly sought for by women who desired to have sons. He did not know its name. Inside the same mosque there is a dark hole in the ground, and if a man is very anxious to have a son he goes down into it at the beginning of Ramazan and stays there forty days, coming out at nights to take a walk and eat food, the quantity and quality of which depends on the severity of the vow he has taken. Some allow themselves only three raisins a day, others eat bread, while those who are less in earnest eat a good plateful of *pilau*. I looked down into the dismal place, but it was pitch dark. The devotees descend into this living tomb by a winding stone staircase. The name of it is *Chillah Hanah* ("Forty Days").

With regard to evergreens, I saw several in

General Medinsky's beautiful garden in Samarkand, but was told that they had all been brought from Russia. As a rule one never sees a green leaf in winter.

The mulberry-tree thrives even better in Central Asia than in Japan; it is, of course, inseparably connected with the culture of silkworms. Its fruit ripens too quickly to be good and sweet, it is flavourless; the natives sometimes make a syrup of it.[1]

Walnut-trees grow wild in the mountains; not far from Bokhara there are hills covered with walnut-woods. The air is full of their fragrance. Whole villages in that neighbourhood live entirely by the sale of these nuts. Pistachio-trees also grow wild; the nut is to be found wherever there is a Sart. Nearly every native sweetmeat contains it, and it is offered to every guest, sometimes with, sometimes without its shell.

The Sarts seem to eat fruit on all occasions when we should eat meat. With the poorer classes it quite takes the place of animal food, and fruit-trees are planted on every inch of available ground inside the town walls. The clay soil suits them admirably. A whole family can live on the produce of one small garden. When a native starts out for a day's work or a journey he takes nothing

[1] I have read that they make a kind of cake from the fruit after it has been dried and powdered.

but a piece of bread with him. Fruit gathered on the way completes his meal. No one is convicted of theft for simply helping himself to fruit from another's garden.

The vine is cultivated in the courtyards of the houses very much as we should cultivate rose-trees. Its branches, supported by a rough trelliswork, form delightful arbours in which whole families spend their days and nights during the hot summer months. Besides this the towns and villages in many districts are surrounded by vineyards all enclosed by high mud walls. We could just see over the top by standing up in our *tarantass* as we drove past. The grapes are of many kinds, white, green, and purple in colour, and vary considerably in shape. Some are almost as large as plums, while the grape that is cultivated most is green and bottled-shaped, longer than any I have seen elsewhere; cut in half, it would make two grapes of the ordinary size.

During my first visit to the country, which was just in the grape season, forty pounds of these grapes could be purchased for the equivalent of threepence, and even in January and February they were selling at a penny a pound. The natives pick them when ripe in the autumn, and preserve them by suspending the bunches separately from the ceilings of their houses. The grape has been cultivated in Turkestan from the very earliest times.

History tells us that the Governor of one of its ancient provinces provided wine for the soldiers of Alexander the Great's army; the Uzbegs, who were strict Mohammedans, did away with the making of wine, and when the Russians came they found no fermented drink made from the grape. Soon after peace had been restored, French experts came out and put several Russian firms in the way of making what has been pronounced by competent judges to be a very good wine. At the same time vines from the Crimea and from Italy were introduced. As the natives have not yet learned the art, the few Russians who are engaged in it are enjoying a profitable monopoly. Even in St. Petersburg their wine has found favour. Turkestan wine is stronger and sweeter than European wines; bought in the country, it costs hardly a fifth of what a wine of the same quality would cost with us. This is not to be wondered at, when the cheapness of the grape is considered. The cost price of each bottle of wine made by the firms I have alluded to is one penny. Red and purple grapes are dried in great quantities by the natives; the women spread them out in the sun on the flat roofs of the houses, and vine-growers who make a business of it build special houses for drying the fruit.

The apricot of Turkestan has a fame of its own. In the Syr Daria province and in Fergana it is

particularly abundant.[1] There are two apricot seasons in the year; the tree blossoms first in March, and the early crop is gathered in May. Tashkent can even boast of a grove of these trees. Cooks prefer apricot wood to any other fuel for their kitchens. The fruit has a fine flavour; it is smaller than ours, but extremely luscious; the natives dry it in the sun with the stone left in. The kernel of the apricot is considered a great delicacy, and can be bought in the bazaars like almonds.

Khiva, Karki, and Charjui rival one another in producing melons, which are not to be surpassed in flavour by those of any other country. There is a small yellow kind, almost round in shape, which ripens in May, and a green one, the shape of an egg, which ripens in August and September. I mention these two in particular because they represent the melons *par excellence* of the country. The last mentioned, like the long green grapes, can be preserved throughout the winter. They are so plentiful that the poor almost live upon them in the autumn; a slice of melon with a piece of bread makes them a most enjoyable dinner. Russians, on the other hand, are afraid to eat them; they believe them to cause fever, and many were the warnings we received in connection with this fruit.

[1] Many years after he was banished from his land, Bábar recalled with a sigh the flavour of the dried apricots stuffed with almonds which were so good in Margelan.—"*Bábar*," *Stanley Lane-Poole.*

It was not till we found ourselves in Bokhara, with no Russians at hand to caution us, that we tried them. Here we set one before our native friends and helped to eat it: the first was by no means the last. Though they had been hung up for four months, they were as fresh as those I had so greatly appreciated in September during my first visit. There are also several kinds of water-melon, but they are not equal to those that grow in the vicinity of Samara, on the banks of the Volga.

There is a kind of gourd or pumpkin, remarkable chiefly for the size to which it can be grown and the uses to which it can be adapted. I saw one at a friend's house a foot and a half high and two feet and a half in circumference.[1] The smaller kinds are trained in the shape of a bell, and are used as snuff-boxes or medicine-bottles; while gourd-pipes, and the dervish's money-boxes, are made out of the larger ones. I have seen several beautifully decorated with artistic designs of inlaid silver. Margelan is the town in which to look for these. The *chilim* or gourd-pipe is often dyed brown and studded with turquoises set in silver.

I found two kinds of fig in the bazaar in September, bright yellow ones, which were the most expensive, and others blue-black. The Sarts do not dry them, so we did not meet with any of this fruit during our winter visit.

[1] This will account for the size of Cinderella's pumpkin!

Pomegranates are abundant at all seasons, but are sour even when ripe, as compared with those of other countries. The Sarts squeeze them over their meat just as we should a lemon over fish. The juice is also used as a red dye, and a yellow dye is made from the skin.

The pears of Turkestan are most of them of a quality that might be described as wooden, yet their juice, which is as fresh and as cooling as that of the prickly pear, makes them very welcome in thirsty weather. But there is a village in Fergana, about fifty miles from Kokand, which is famed far and wide for its pears, equal to any that Europe can produce. *Delafrus* is the name of the village, and that is the French-sounding name by which these pears are known.

Another village, *Ulmas*, lying a few miles from Chyust, is equally famous for its apples, and, strange to say, also for its beautiful women! Russians have tried in vain to transplant the apples; they invariably languish when removed from their native soil. The Sart word for apple is *ulma*.

The only dates I came across were some crystallised ones placed before us by a Sart, as the greatest delicacy his house contained; his brother had brought them for him from Mecca.

CHAPTER IV

CULTIVATION OF COTTON

"Por el dinero baila el perro."—*Spanish Proverb.*

I HAVE visited towns in Japan where bread could not be bought for money, and where the inhabitants used rice instead. In Turkestan every Sart who can afford it likes to have one meal of meat and rice a day, but here, rice never takes the place of bread. Rice fields are to be found wherever sufficient water can be had to cover them, though of late the Russians have made a law that they must not come within a prescribed distance of the towns, as a miasma which rises from their standing water is thought to engender fevers.

The native bread is made of wheat, which cereal, like barley, has both a summer and a winter harvest. The best wheat grows in East Bokhara. Millet is much cultivated by the nomads, as food for horses; but rye and oats, which were introduced by the Russians, are not much cultivated by any of the natives. There is a kind of American maize called *Jyugara* which the Venetians are said to have introduced into Asia. It is extensively

cultivated, and its stalks are used as food for horses. We saw quantities of it stacked in the branches of leafless willow-trees, while on our winter journey through the villages of the Syr Daria Province. Russia has forbidden the cultivation of opium, which was formerly very extensive.

"What have you got in that great jar?" was a question I often asked when visiting native homes.

"Kunshyut," was the invariable reply.

Kunshyut (*Sesamum Indicum*) is cultivated for the sake of the oil that can be extracted from its seeds; it is one of the chief ingredients in native cooking, though the very poor substitute cotton-seed oil. The oil is pressed out by means of a mill, turned by horses, just as wheat is ground in Morocco; each horse is made to turn the millstone for three hours at a time — during which period three pounds of oil are extracted.[1]

Morgui, another cereal, is said to grow only in Central Asia. It has the appearance of linseed.

Reeds, which thrive in swamps and marshy lands, often grow to a height of more than twelve feet; clumps of them were used as places of ambush

[1] Schwarz tells us that the extraction of oil from sesamum was known in Turkestan as far back as the time of Alexander, and he quotes from Curcius, Book VIII.: "Alexander Caucasum, quidem, ut supra dictum est, transierat, sed inopia frumenti prope ad famem ventum erat. Suco ex sesama expresso haud secus quam oleo artus perunguebant. Sed huius suci ducenis quadragenis denariis amphoræ singulæ æstimabantur."

by the natives in their contests with the Russians. A man on horseback, or a camel, could be completely hidden by them.

Next to the arrival of the Russians themselves no event has brought so many changes into the life of the Sarts as the introduction of American cotton; whether it will prove a blessing or a curse it yet remains to be seen. Turkestan has grown cotton from time immemorial; the seeds were brought in the first place from India, and the quality of their cotton is the same as that now produced in India. It was General Kaufmann, the first Governor-General, who, in his efforts for the good of the land, introduced seed from America. Native seed is now grown only in Bokhara[1] and Samarkand; its pods do not open so widely as those produced by American seed, and consequently cause double labour, having to be picked from the shrub before the cotton can be taken out; besides which the quality of the cotton is less elastic. Certain Moscow capitalists, hearing of the splendid crops that American seed was yielding, and being fully aware that labour was far cheaper in Central Asia than in America, soon turned their attention to the

[1] The grower of American cotton has difficulties to contend with from which the grower of Bokharan cotton is exempt. The pod, opening widely as it does of its own accord, induces sparrows and mice to steal its wool for their nests. I heard of one case where considerable loss was sustained owing to those troublesome visitors. As for the sparrows, they come in clouds like locusts.

matter, and from that day to this cotton has been quickly and steadily taking the place of every other field produce in the country. To-day the cotton production of Turkestan is only surpassed by that of America. During the season 1899–1900 two thousand seven hundred puds of pure American cotton were harvested in the province of Fergana alone; in 1900–1901 five thousand, and in 1901–1902 three thousand puds. The local price of this cotton per pud (40 lbs. Eng.) is eighteen shillings, while in the Moscow markets it fetches twenty-two shillings; the extra four shillings being the cost of transport. Not only Russians but Sarts also are discovering that the way to become rich is to cultivate cotton; the latter find it far more profitable to grow cotton than even rice. The rice-grower gets no money for his pains till after the harvest, whereas within an equal period of time the cotton-grower is paid three times over by Russian cotton merchants. He is paid first for planting the seed, which he gets gratis, then for gathering the crop, and finally he receives a full price for it on delivery. The consequence is that every Sart who has an inch of ground that he can call his own is beginning to plant cotton. Russians who are otherwise employed are beginning to look askance at this state of things; they are reminded most unpleasantly of "where the shoe pinches." As there are no meadows, and

consequently no haystacks, in Turkestan, horses have to depend on crops that are specially sown for them, as I have mentioned above, and, less ground being available for this purpose every year, incredibly high prices are being asked for their food, so that ladies who kept their own carriages until four years ago are now obliged to go on foot. I asked a cotton merchant in Kokand what final result was to be expected from this state of things.

"Matters will grow worse and worse," he replied, "till the railway between Orenburg and Tashkent is completed, after which corn from Siberia will be supplied in plenty at just one-sixth the price we now pay for it in Fergana; all the land can then be used to grow cotton. The Amir of Bokhara forces his subjects to grow a certain amount of corn on their private lands, and thus the danger of famine in that province is warded off."

I visited cotton-separating establishments in Samarkand, in Namangan, and in Bairam-Ali. In the first, cotton was being separated from its seed in machines worked by petroleum, and then rammed into sacks till it became as hard as a wall—twenty pounds rammed into one cubic foot by means of hydraulic pressure; the machines used were from Halifax. In America each bale is tied up with iron bands, but here iron wire was used. The air becomes so full of cotton fluff in dry weather that the packers can only work for a short time at a

stretch. Women and children go out into the country and pick the pods when ripe, and men bring them to the bazaar in sacks. There is a particular period of its growth at which it must be picked, otherwise it is useless. It has a pretty yellow, and sometimes a lilac flower, which blooms about the end of July. While going my round of inspection it was amusing to have a heap of cotton pointed out to me as "good middling" by a Russian who knew no English.

"You see we have adopted the American terms," said he in German; "even the separating-machines are known as 'gins.'"

The factory at Namangan was one of the sights of the town at night, when all its separating-machines were at work and its electric lights turned on. But the sight that impressed me more than all was that of mountains of cotton-seed on the Emperor's private estate at Bairam-Ali.

"Whatever do you propose to do with all this seed?" I asked the manager.

"That is our difficulty," he replied, "we don't know what to do with it. The people engaged on the estate use some of it for fuel, but they could not possibly make use of a hundredth part, and we are so far from any town where it could be used that the expense of taking it there would be greater than the profit in selling it."

Russians use cotton-seed for fuel when they wish to be economical, but many object to it on account

of the unpleasant odour that pervades the house even when it is only used in the kitchen. The very poor among the natives use oil pressed from the seeds for cooking; they say it has no taste and makes an excellent salad. They also burn it in their lamps instead of petroleum. When the oil has been extracted, the bruised seeds are made into cakes for camels' food, or what seems more strange, moulded like clay into graceful, long-necked bottles, which, after having been baked in the fire and blackened with smoke, are used to carry the very oil that has been extracted from them. One sees many a man sitting in the bazaar with a pile of camels' cakes on one side of him and a number of these oil-vessels on the other.

No cotton is grown further south than Tashkent, or further east than Andijan, as the cold becomes too great. From Andijan to Osh the ground rises steadily, and snow lies inches deep in the neighbourhood of Osh during winter. While driving through the stony stretch of desert that lies between Kokand and Namangan, we espied in the distance what we took to be a group of ancient ruins, not unlike Stonehenge. A drove of camels on their knees close by added to the picturesqueness of the scene. What was our astonishment when on coming up to them we discovered that the supposed ruins were huge bales of cotton on their way to Moscow. The camels were waiting to be reloaded after a halt for rest and food.

CHAPTER V

THE SILK INDUSTRY

WHEN taking our first stroll in Russian Kokand, we noticed a band of gold shining through the trees on the other side of the street, and wondering what it could be, crossed over to examine the glittering object. It proved to be a skein of silk fresh from the cocoons, of such a length that it had been wound round the trunks of two poplars more than twenty yards apart. A Sart was carefully combing it; he seemed surprised that we should stop to look at what, to him, was so common a sight. A little later, in another street we came across a still longer skein, but this one had been dyed, and shone a brilliant purple in the afternoon sunlight. It was thus that I began my acquaintance with the most ancient as well as the most important industry of the country. In a land where mulberry-trees abound, and where the sky is serene and the temperature warm throughout the greater part of the year, the cultivation of silkworms has much in its favour; yet there was a time, soon after the Russians came, when silkworms were scarce, and when disease threatened to destroy those that

were left. Silk manufacturers from Europe had for some years been carrying off cocoons by thousands, when, in 1871, through the efforts of General Kaufmann, a stop was put to this, and experts were induced to settle in the country, that they might revive the languishing industry, which was then at its last gasp.

In the year 1889, M. Aloisé, a Corsican by birth, came to Turkestan with 500 boxes of eggs from France. The Russian Government supported his efforts, and from that time to this he has thrown his whole energy into the cultivation of silkworms in Central Asia. I heard from his own lips that he sold to the Sart peasants in 1901 as many as 202,000 boxes of French eggs. The cultivation of native worms has practically ceased. Every season when the cocoons are ready, M. Aloisé buys them from the people. On paying a visit to his establishment, we were shown with what care the eggs of each moth are examined under the microscope, lest one diseased grub might get amongst the rest and so cause a deterioration in the quality of the silk. Until the time for this each moth is shut up with its eggs in a separate cotton bag, and if it or one of the eggs is found to be diseased, both moth and eggs are destroyed by fire.

The machinery for boiling the cocoons and winding the silk is all on a much more primitive scale than that of Japan, but the quality of the silk

produced is infinitely superior. One worm is said to devour the leaves of seven mulberry-trees during the course of its short but active career. M. Aloisé showed us in his garden several specimens of the weeping mulberry which he had imported from Spain. Having come into the country a poor man, this gentleman is now one of the richest merchants in Fergana, where, greatly respected by Russians and natives alike, he rejoices in the title of "Le roi des grains." M. Aloisé is also the author of a manual of instruction as to how silkworms should be cultivated. He gave me one as a memento, and I found that its contents were arranged in the form of questions and answers, like the school books of our early days. Though the women still rear a great many worms, this business is now carried on to a great extent by men. In Margelan I saw long low buildings which had been set apart for the purpose. During the cold weather the eggs are stored here in sacks. Until the price of the cocoons went down, many of the Russian ladies used also to rear worms, and add to their pocket-money by selling cocoons.

When the silk has been wound off the cocoons, it is sold to native dyers. In Bokhara this department is almost exclusively in the hands of Jews. The dyes most in use are indigo, imported from India; cochineal, from Russia; and madder (*Delphinium sulphureum*), which grows wild on the

steppes. *Sophora Japonica* is also used as a yellow dye.

The weavers buy the silk for the dyer and weave it on the most primitive of looms. We visited several weavers at their work in Kokand. Turning suddenly in at a low doorway in a rough mud wall, we found ourselves in a fair-sized room where a number of weavers sat at work. The mud walls bristled with the straw of which they were partially composed, and the weavers' garments were ragged and dirty. What a strange contrast the rich, soft silk upon the looms presented to its miserable surroundings! Silk is not always a sign of luxury or wealth in Turkestan. I can see as I write the figure of one of the stalwart countrymen who ferried us across the Syr Daria, miles away from any town or village. His outer garment was in rags and half covered with mud, but as he worked away at the rope we could see that he wore beneath this a tunic of the finest silk, fine, I would add, in quality, for the thread of Turkestan silk is much coarser than that of China and Japan, and consequently stands a far greater amount of wear. The Russians have proved this for themselves; gentlemen find it a real economy to indulge in the luxury of silken shirts, for a piece of white silk costing forty-five shillings makes them six European shirts which "will wear for ever"; and ladies can line all their dresses with silk,

without feeling that it is an extravagance. The Sarts also manufacture a curious material called *adras*, half cotton, half silk; of this the robes of Bokharan officials are usually made. It has a shiny, paper-like appearance, which is obtained by soaking it in white of egg. There is also a rich velvet manufactured in Bokhara.

It seemed to me, when driving for the first time through the streets of Samarkand on a brilliant September morning in 1896, that Keats could not have chosen a more appropriate epithet for that city than "Silken Samarkand"; almost every other man we met was clothed in silk. A gentle breeze filled their long, wide sleeves till they looked like silken pillows, and spread out the folds of their ample garments, while the silk embroidery on the boys' caps shone in the direct rays of the midday sun. I feel it impossible to write about Central Asia without constantly referring to the rapid changes that have taken place during the last few years. Were a poet to write of Samarkand to-day, "cotton" is the epithet that truth would compel him to use. While the cotton-seed is usurping every inch of cultivable ground, while its odour is spoiling the fragrance of the air, and its scattered fluff making the very streets look like factories, materials manufactured in Moscow from that very same cotton are quietly but surely usurping the place of those glorious silks that once charmed the eye of every European traveller. But,

alas! it is not only the silk that is disappearing. A book published in 1901 has the following passage:—"We are not quite certain that the treasures of Samarkand are dispersed. The plunder of a world was collected there once, and, though it is improbable, the Khans of Bokhara may still possess articles forwarded by Jenghiz and his son's couriers to that strange capital at the back of the world, on which every road in Asia is said to have converged."[1] There are still treasures in Samarkand, but it is only the patient excavators who will find them, they lie hidden under the ruin and rubbish of centuries. Many a Sart who has an eye for gain would willingly do a little digging on his own account had not the Government wisely put a check to such destructive proceedings. As it is, they flock like birds of prey to each likely spot after a fall of rain, pick up every fragment that has been worked into sight, and sell it for all they can get to the first curio-dealer they meet, in spite of the fact that the law commands them to bring everything they find to the local museum, and promises them in return one-half the value of their treasure.

The Russian curio-dealer is a lucky fellow. For the last ten years, to say the least, he has been making his fortune rapidly; a fact not to be wondered at when we consider that he has the whole of Russian Turkestan as his own private reserve.

[1] "Asia and Europe," by Meredith Townsend.

As a permit to enter Turkestan is rarely granted to any but Russian subjects, and *never to foreigners of the mercantile class*, the Russian curio-dealer has no one to interfere with the splendid monopoly upon which he is growing so fat and sleek. He has his emissaries all over the country, in Khiva, in Bokhara, in Samarkand, and in Kashgar, which last named, being Chinese territory, is of course open to all. Many of these emissaries are of the Hebrew race; and this point is greatly in their favour, for it enables them to gain an easy admittance to the houses of native Jews, which in themselves are mines of wealth to the collector of antiquities. I came across one such emissary in Kokand, and was interested in looking over some of his latest booty, which consisted of several Greek coins, on one of which it was easy to distinguish the head of Alexander the Great, with his name in Greek characters round it; another was a Roman coin of pure gold, on which we read the inscription of the Emperor Titus; we also saw several beautifully carved metal caskets.

"How do you know that the coins are genuine?" I asked.

"Show me the man in Kokand who could make one of them," was the man's reply.

I then asked who would buy them of him.

"I sell a good many to private gentlemen," he replied, "in England and Scotland, who are themselves clever numismatologists and possess priceless

collections that have been handed down from father to son for generations. I also sell a great many in America, but the Americans only began to collect about fifteen or twenty years ago. They are keen at it, but have not the understanding that I find in Britain; still, they are ready enough to buy."



CHAPTER VI

GOVERNMENT OF NATIVE TOWNS

A LITTLE to the north of Tashkent there lies a small town called Turkestan. On their way southward from Siberia in 1864, the Russians took it, and many writers affirm that, mistaking its name for that of the entire region, they adopted the appellation of "Turkestan" for their new territory. Up to that time, they assure us, the Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva, and Kokand were known by these names alone. Yet I find that Gibbon also gave the name of Turkestan to that part of the world, and he wrote more than a hundred years earlier.[1]

A Central Asian Khanate consists of a number of small states gathered loosely together under one supreme ruler. Each of these states is composed of a large town and the villages scattered around it. A Khan or Amir governs directly that town alone in which he resides. Here he collects the taxes, appoints judges and other officials, and decides all important disputes and criminal cases. The states, it will be remembered, are separated from one another by great stretches of desert, and each is

[1] Marco Polo called it "Great Turkey."

in itself an oasis from which its nearest neighbour is often a hundred miles removed. It was imperative in the old days, when communication was more difficult, that the individual Governors or *Begs* should be invested with absolute power over the territory they had to govern. Their position has been compared to that of the Satraps of ancient Persia. Like the Satraps, they often rebelled against their masters and fought with one another when it suited them to do so; but when the Russians came upon the scene things were changed. Bokhara and Khiva surrendered and became vassal states to Russia, who thought it the wisest policy to strengthen the hands of their respective Khans and reduce the position of the Begs to that of mere government officials. The execution of several unruly Begs upon Russian territory was a sufficient warning to their successors. The people of Kokand showed more spirit; they fought it out to the last; but the Russians won the day, and the Khan was forced to flee, leaving the land to become Russian territory.

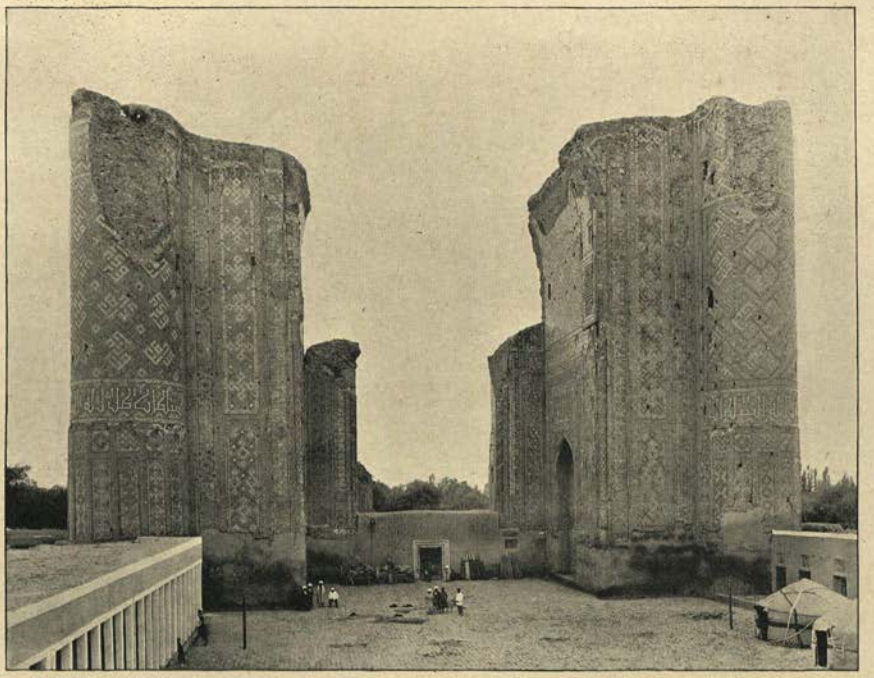
The Khanates were all governed in one and the same manner: each had, as Bokhara has to-day, its *Cush Beggi* or Chief Minister, who was prohibited from leaving the citadel in the absence of the Amir; its *Diwan Beggi* or Finance Minister, and a number of minor officials, besides its military commander and the officers under him. In addition there were

always numerous courtiers whose duty it was to appear in gorgeous robes on state occasions, and help to increase the pomp that surrounded their ruler.

Twice every year the Amir of Bokhara receives a prescribed number of presents from each of his Begs—so many horses, so many robes, so many yards of silk. The costliness of these presents is regulated according to the wealth of the territory over which the Beg is ruler. If the Amir chooses to visit one of his Begs, he must be received, retinue and all, into the Beg's palace, where he remains as long as he likes at the expense of the town. In February 1902 the Amir of Bokhara spent ten days with the Beg of Charjui, on his way to St. Petersburg, and the cost of entertaining him was by no means light. The women of Charjui are said to be the most beautiful in all Bokhara; and among his presents the Beg has to supply two young girls every year for the Amir's harem.

Before the Russian conquest the Amirs of Bokhara had their summer palace at Samarkand. Kerminé, about seventy miles from the town of Bokhara, is the favourite residence of the present Amir. "He was Beg there before he became Amir, and has a particular attachment for the place." So says an official guide-book published in Tashkent; but in Bokhara the natives tell a different tale.

The relationship I have described as existing



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AMIR'S SUMMER PALACE NEAR BOKHARA

(Russian soldiers and Sarts in the foreground)

between the Amirs or Khans and their Begs, and their mode of government, was established long before the land came under Uzbeg sway; indeed some writers trace it back to the time of its original inhabitants, the people of Bactria and Sogdiana, who were of Indo-Germanic stock. His periodical visits to the Amir are the *Schattenseite*, as a German writer expresses it, of a Beg's otherwise happy existence. He leaves his house without knowing whether his master will allow him ever to return to it; all depends upon the humour in which the Amir happens to be when the Beg arrives on the scene, and the words which may be whispered into his ear by jealous courtiers. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that heavy sums spent in bribery have to be included in a Beg's annual outlay.

The administration of Bokhara is in the hands of its Cush Beggi, but if there is a case between a Bokharan and a European it goes before the Russian Political Agent, who resides in the Russian town of that name. If a street quarrel arises in Bokhara, an official called a *Reis*, whose special duty it is to keep order in the streets, has a right to whip the disputants out of the way; and, although this office has been done away with in Russian territory, even there the native police still make free use of the whip when a crowd has to be dispersed. One of the most amusing memories I carried away with me is that of a whipping scene that took place in front

of the chief mosque in Kokand, after the hour of universal prayer with which the fast of Ramazan was brought to a close. The people who filled the great court made a rush for the gate, and the native police fearing a crush, began to whip vigorously on all sides. Whack! whack! whack! went the whip on their wadded-cotton coats — it really seemed enough to frighten a hero. As all fled before the whip, no one was hurt; had any one tried to brave it, a lash across the face would soon have brought him to his senses.

Every native town has its own police, with a *Kur-baski*, or Chief of Police, at their head, who, in his turn, is under the supervision of the Russian police. As in Bokhara and Khiva, here also the night-watchman disturbs the slumbers of all who are not accustomed to it from their youth, with the noise of his weird-sounding drum. All night long he wanders up and down the deserted streets, or, oftener still, upon the flat roofs of the particular half-dozen houses whose inmates have subscribed towards his maintenance, hardly ceasing for an instant to beat his drum. The idea is that thieves will be afraid to do any mischief when he is on the watch, whereas in reality the system has great advantages for evildoers, as it relieves them from all fear of being surprised.

The houses of Sart towns are divided into sets of fifty. From the fifty householders in each set one

is chosen to be *Ellik-bashi*, or "head of fifty"; he again is under a head of a district, a *Min-bashi*, who, in his turn, is under Russian supervision.

Every town has its *Aksakal*, or Grey-beard, whose position corresponds in the main with that of a mayor. He is chosen by the people for a period of three years, and acts as their representative to the Russians, whose policy it is to allow the Sarts as much freedom as possible in the management of their own affairs. The same *Aksakal* may not be elected more than twice following.

With regard to military matters, there is no conscription for Sarts on Russian ground, the Government being well aware that these people are not such stuff as heroes are made of, and that their presence in the army would be less advantageous than their absence from it. The Amir of Bokhara has of course his own militia, and, since the Czar honoured him with the title of Ataman of the Terski Cossacks, he has always maintained a bodyguard of a hundred Cossacks. His army is divided into regulars and irregulars, besides which there are also volunteers. Once a man enters the army he remains in it for life, with the result that youths and old men are to be seen serving side by side. The only paid servants of the Amir are those in the army, which is composed chiefly of men who have committed some crime—loafers, good-for-nothings, young boys, and decrepit veterans; each of these receives as

much as six shillings monthly from his government. As for their weapons, one soldier is furnished with a gun that served in the Crimean War, another with a bayonet from the time of Napoleon; the cannon with which the citadel would be defended in the case of an attack are copper ones from the field of Waterloo, on wooden wheels, which have to be loaded in front. The uniform of the rank and file is partly Russian, but the trousers are red, and the caps are without cockades. The uniform of the officers is quite Russian, while the cavalry are attired as Cossacks. The epaulettes of the former, which have a sorry appearance, have been mostly procured from hawkers of old clothes, after having served their day upon Russian shoulders. The entire force is said to consist of 20,000 men, though I heard in Bokhara that it was only 14,000.

Russians residing in the country are fond of decorating the walls of their houses with native armour made in Kokand. I saw helmets with perforated visors, breastplates, and whole suits of chain armour, many of which had been picked up on the battlefield after the conquest of Kokand in 1876. Yet, in spite of the warlike appearance that the natives must have presented in those days, the Russians succeeded in taking the largest and most strongly fortified town in Central Asia with a force of only two battalions.

CHAPTER VII

SART TOWNS

THERE is a remarkable similarity between one Sart town and another. Indeed it has been truly said that, if a man well acquainted with the country were to be set down blindfolded in any one of those that are not distinguishable by their towering ruins dating from the time of Tamerlane, he would find it difficult, on using his eyes again, to say in which town he was. The central point in every town is its bazaar. Round this are built the dwelling-houses of the people, interspersed with small gardens, courtyards, and crooked alleys, very few of which are wide enough for European traffic. Surrounding all these is the town wall with its gates and citadel, or at least the traces of them, and outside the walls are the fields and gardens of the citizens. The whole is intersected by innumerable canals. As all the chief streets converge to one point—either the market-place or the bazaar—a new-comer soon learns to find his way about. Then, too, there are always plenty of heavily laden Kirgiz camels passing to and from the surrounding steppe, and a glance at these will soon show the lie of the land. Town

wall, citadel, houses, all are built of the very soil on which they stand, a kind of clay, particularly suited for the purpose, and, as a Jew who remembered the history of his ancestors informed me, closely resembles that of which bricks were once made in Egypt.

"To build a Sart house," said that gentleman, "you only need a good rainfall and plenty of mud. You can get some doors and windows ready-made. Be sure to put your household stores of wood and charcoal on the roof, or the rain alone will soon demolish your dwelling. As it is, every house is in a constant state of rebuilding."

When dry this clay is as hard as stone, and, as the climate is an exceptionally dry one, bricks made of it can very well be used for building. Moistened with water it becomes pliable as wax. When a Sart is going to build a wall, he first digs a trench close to the site chosen, and then turns into it the water from the nearest canal. With the water he now mixes the soil thrown up from the trench, adding at the same time a quantity of straw, and stamping on it till his feet have kneaded it into a thick paste. Then he takes a lump, works a stone into the middle, and lays his first brick aside to bake in the sun; as soon as a sufficient number are ready the first layer of the wall is made, and the second is added when the first is dry. When the wall has reached the desired height it is smoothly plastered



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SART CHILDREN IN FERGANA

(Showing men's courtyard)

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over with a thin layer of clay, and this, of course, is the first to suffer when rain comes. One often sees the rough bricks partially exposed to view, and the whole structure looking quite dilapidated, though but a few months have passed since its completion.

"How did these walls serve the Sarts when the Russians came against them?" was a question that rose to my lips, as I looked at what remains of the old wall at Tashkent.

"Our bullets went through them if they were at all thin," was the answer; "and if they were thick the bullets simply rebounded, so we always concentrated our attacks upon the city gates."

Some towns have as many as twelve gates. Bokhara the Noble has eleven. Every gate has a round tower on either side of it, always larger at the base than at the summit, and built with platforms for its defenders. The gates of Bokhara and Khiva are shut at sunset, and the keys handed over to the keeping of the chief of the police, lest the sentinel should fall asleep or prove unfaithful to his charge. The people of Tashkent further protected their town in the old days by making artificial hills at regular intervals in the surrounding steppe, on each of which two sentinels were placed to spy out an approaching foe; they are still to be seen in the direction of Fergana, reaching to a distance of fifty miles.

The streets of a Sart town are little more than twisting pathways between windowless mud walls; these are not the walls of the houses, but of the court-yards in which the houses are enclosed. Their height is just sufficient to make it impossible for a man mounted on horse or camel to see over them as he rides along the street. A Sart's home is his castle, and no stranger's eye must ever rest on the fair forms that dwell therein. Curiosity often led me to look in at the open doorways, but, as far as seeing anything went, I was invariably disappointed, for in every case my eye rested on the blank wall of another court which stood between me and the abode on the threshold of which I was trespassing. In order to ensure the strictest privacy, no door ever opens opposite another. The streets are paved by nature with the same clay as that with which the houses are built, so that they are inches deep in powdery dust in summer, and covered with an even greater depth of oozy mud in winter. Of all the towns I saw at this season Tashkent was certainly the richest in mud. On one occasion when we were visiting two of the wealthiest families in the native town, who lived in the same street exactly opposite each other, we had to get into the droshky to cross the road. Had we attempted it on foot the mud would have reached above our knees. Yet there had been no rain for a week. A writer describes how he rescued a little Sart boy, whose horse had

stumbled, from an untimely end. He lifted the child out of the mud by the only part of him that was visible—his heels. In Bokhara, after a day's rain, I found it impossible to walk, even in the covered streets of the bazaar, without clutching the arm of the gentleman who accompanied me. Narrow though the streets of Tashkent may be, they are wider as a rule than those of Tangier, or of old Cairo; wheeled vehicles can pass through many of them, though it often happens that, when two conveyances meet, one has to back out of the way.

Not only the absence of windows, but also that of women, has to do with the monotony of the streets. I have roamed about Bokhara for days together without encountering one solitary female figure. In the towns that are completely under Russian sway one certainly sees more women about, but even there their presence does little to enliven the scene, for, rich and poor alike, all are enveloped in a shapeless outer garment of sombre grey, with veils of black horsehair.

When a Sart wants amusement he turns his steps instinctively to the bazaar; when he wants news of what is going on in the world he is off to the bazaar, and when in fact there is no urgent reason why he should be there, you will find him in the bazaar. He has the usual Eastern peculiarity that he would rather walk than run, stand than walk, sit than stand, and the place above all where

he prefers to sit is the bazaar. The most interesting bazaars to foreigners are those of Bokhara and Tashkent. The latter is one of the largest in Central Asia; it has upwards of 4500 booths or shops lining the sides of its interesting streets, which are wider than those of Bokhara. In both towns they are covered with reed matting supported by beams laid across from the booths on either side, so that one can stroll there in the hottest part of a summer's day without any inconvenience from the sun's rays. The booths have neither windows nor doors; they are closed at night by means of shutters made of wood, or sometimes of matting. The salesman sits tailor fashion in the front of his shop in summer, while in winter his feet are tucked under a low table covered with a cotton quilt under which is a pan of charcoal, and his appearance is more like that of a sick person in bed than of a pushing tradesman anxious to sell his wares. One customer will seat himself comfortably by his side before beginning to inspect his goods, while another will complete a bargain without descending from his horse, the articles being spread out one by one on the animal's neck for inspection. When several customers halt before the same booth, a wooden bench is placed in front of it, and they sit there in a row. Shopping is simplified by the fact that all shoemakers are together in one section, all jewellers in another, and so on. No time is lost in hunting for a particular

class of article, the buyer knows exactly where to look for what he wants, nevertheless shopping is a much more lengthy and serious affair with the Sart than it is with us. More than once my Russian friends administered to me a mild reproof for asking the prices too abruptly. "The price must be asked in a separate conversation," I was told; and when I requested that an article I had chosen should be wrapped in paper, a man standing by went off to fetch some, but took so long about it that I began to despair of seeing him again. Paper always has to be fetched when customers want it, and it is often more expensive than the goods themselves. One day in Samarkand I bought a number of caps, and my parcel needed string as well as paper. Immediately one bystander went off for paper, while another, an old man with one eye, stepped up and handed me a piece of string. On another occasion, though pressed for time, I stopped to buy some grapes in the Rigistan, thinking it would be a matter of but a few moments to pay for and carry them off; but, alas! it was not such a simple affair; a crowd of spectators gathered round. The man, who was sitting on the ground with his fruit around him, slowly weighed out two pounds, stopping in the middle to talk to the lookers-on, apologising for his use of a stone as a weight, which was against the law, he being too poor to purchase standard weights, and talking on and on about this and that till I lost all patience.

"You can't buy without a conversation," said a lady who was with me. "That is impossible!"

If you ask a man the price of all the goods in his shop he says, "Oh, I could not possibly sell you all, because then I should have no shop and my business would come to a standstill." This is not unlike a story told me by a friend in Japan. She wished to buy some biscuits of a particular kind, but the Jap had sold them all. "I suppose you will get more?" she said. "Oh no," he replied, "they would only be sold over again directly, if I did." A Chinaman would act differently. The most profitable months for a tradesman are those following the wheat and cotton harvests, for the people have more money and are anxious to buy. A Russian gentleman, who was acting as my interpreter in the bazaar at Andijan, said to one of the shopkeepers—

"How much money do you make a year?"

"God alone knows," was the reply.

"He is afraid to tell the truth to a Russian," said my friend, "lest he might go home and raise the prices of Russian goods. No Sart will ever tell us what he sells or gains. They make a little money and then lend it out, requiring cent. per cent. Indeed it is no uncommon thing for a man to lend his neighbour five roubles for a week and demand six in return."

The Sarts love to bargain. M. Nalivkin tells us

how on one occasion, when there was to be a theatrical performance for which the entrance was fifteen kopecks (threepence), they bargained at the door to be allowed to enter for eight, nine, and ten kopecks. The women, too, have an eye to business; they are occasionally to be seen seated on the ground in the bazaar with bread or caps for sale, but they do not make very much in that way, as it is against the law of Mohammed that their voices should be heard in the street; thus the men, who may shout as much as they like, take most of the custom away from them. Whereas in Europe the ladies do most of the shopping, with the Sarts it is just the reverse. No lady of the upper class ever goes to the bazaar; her men-folk go for her, and they are nothing loth.

A very characteristic feature of the Central Asian bazaar is its ubiquitous *chai khana* or tea-shop. A carpet is spread on the floor for the passer-by to rest upon. And a huge samovar hisses at the entrance with a tempting row of teapots, one for every customer, ranged before it. There is a row of *chai khanas* on one side of the public square, or *chosu* as the Sarts call it, of Kokand, and we elected to spend an afternoon in one of them, that we might have an opportunity of studying the ways of the people. The day chosen was a very favourable one, their feast-day at the close of Ramazan. Everybody had come to the bazaar with the intention of having

a good time. The word *chosu* means "four canals"; it was most appropriate to the square in which we found ourselves that afternoon, for that was bounded on all sides by four filthy canals. When I first saw a man stoop to fill a pitcher from one of those muddy streams, and hand it to another for a drink, I involuntarily shut my eyes in horror. I ended, however, by drinking some of the selfsame water in my tea an hour later, but not until it had been well boiled in the samovar.

Close to our tea-shop a man sat on the ground with a metal tray in front of him heaped with bits of cooked meat. He had a pile of small plates by his side, and, as each customer approached, took a piece of meat in his fingers, cut it up with a rough pocket-knive, and handed a plateful to him; the customer ate it with his fingers, put down the plate, threw three tiny copper coins in payment, and walked off. The meat-seller, having dexterously caught the coins in his right hand, slapped them into his mouth, and so had his hand free to provide for the next comer. I was just wondering how much money that mouth would hold, when my attention was attracted by a prettier scene. Close by, also squatted on the ground, was a seller of children's toys. Round him were collected all manner of quaint playthings, strange-looking whistles and musical, or rather unmusical, instruments. Several juvenile customers between the ages of five and six had gone down on

their little knees before these treasures, and were taking music lessons from the good-natured fellow as he lifted his wares one by one and explained their use. As soon as one of the children had succeeded in blowing a shrill whistle, from an instrument which looked like a mud teapot, he gravely decided to purchase it, and handed from his little store three kopecks (about three farthings) in exchange, with the air of a man who had successfully concluded a weighty transaction.

The crowd in the square was rapidly increasing, and the sellers on the ground were soon hidden by the people pressing round them. How they managed to keep their wares from being trodden on was a mystery. Presently a man made his way through the crowd by means of a whip which he held in his hand. Slash, slash, slash went the whip, and the people made way in a twinkle.

"What right has that man to whip the rest out of his way like that?" I asked.

"He who has the whip whips," was the answer; and then, seeing my surprise, my informant added, "It doesn't really hurt any one, you know, especially in winter when the men's robes are so well wadded."

In front of the tea-shop in which we had installed ourselves was a long row of men's shoes, to which we had added our goloshes. In a land of

mud—in winter—it is the custom to leave one's foot-gear at the entrance even of a tea-shop, but there is no religious importance attached to the taking off of shoes in Central Asia, it is merely a matter of convenience. The ceiling above us was in itself a study. Here was a solitary apple suspended by matting, here an onion, here a broken teapot, a bunch of dried herbs, and an egg; there, a medicine bottle, a fan, a key, and a melon—each object suspended from the rafters with equal precision. In and out and all about were fluttering small brown doves. They seemed to have their nests in the eaves, and no one took any notice of them. When any native member of our party wanted a fresh cup of tea, he tossed the last drops into the corner before handing the cup to be refilled.

"I have known Russians who have been much with Sarts take up that habit," said a friend, smiling, "and it has had rather awkward consequences in European drawing-rooms."

Every one was eating pistachio-nuts, so the ground was strewed all over with their shells. Presently a man came forward with a broom and began to sweep them together, wherever the people left him room to do so.

"You see," said my companion, "they are sweeping up the pistachio-shells. Nothing is wasted here."

A few minutes later all the shops in the bazaar

were shut, for the sun was setting, and it is against the rules for them to remain open after the first call to prayer. Many of the tradesmen wrapped up their wares, and took them home with them for the night.



CHAPTER VIII

THE STRICTEST MOHAMMEDANS IN THE WORLD

THE public buildings of a Sart town are so closely connected with the religion of its inhabitants that it will be best for us to make ourselves clear about the tenets of the latter before we go any further. To begin with, the Sarts are Mohammedans; they belong to that section of the Prophet's followers who accept the *sunna* or traditions, and the four Caliphs, as well as the Koran. They are much more zealous in their religious observances than their neighbours the Persians—who are Shiites, and only recognise Mohammed and his nephew Ali[1]; in fact throughout the whole of the Mohammedan world there is no one so strict, or so fanatical in some respects, as the Sart, though, as regards the forbidding of intercourse with unbelievers, such as Christians or Jews, the Shiites are the more strict of the two. The Russians make a point of doing away with everything that might fan zeal or increase the fanaticism of their Asiatic subjects. For this reason they will not let them rebuild their crumbling

[1] The Shiites believe it allowable to abjure their religion in case of danger to their life, which is not permitted by the Sunnites.—*Schuyler.*

mosques, and for the same reason they have done away with the custom of appointing a *Reis*, or native official, to enforce obedience to the Koran. The people are no longer whipped to church if they refuse to go of their own accord, and if a tradesman uses false weights, or cheats in any other way, he is no longer in daily fear of a whipping, whatever other punishment may be in store for him. I am told, however, that the *Reis* of Bokhara only uses his whip with those culprits who are not ready to bribe him sufficiently, so the whole is nothing but a system of corruption, and all intelligent citizens must be glad that it has been abolished in so many towns.

The Persian costume is much more recent than that of the Sart, which, with its ample turban and flowing robes, was in vogue long before the time of Mohammed, and has never changed since. In Persia it is only the mullahs who wear turbans, as a sign of holiness, whilst in Bokhara and Khiva all must wear them, and girdles as well. In Afghanistan a man must wear a girdle that can be used as his shroud; but here it is the turban that is adapted to that purpose. In Persia the face may or may not be shaved, according to individual taste; it is only compulsory for a mullah. With the Sarts all must shave the head as soon as the beard begins to grow, and this, of course, necessitates the wearing of a turban or a cap. The moustache is shaved above the

upper lip, which must always show, to ensure cleanliness in eating, but the beard is not touched. In no country are there so many barbers, or, I should say, head-shavers, for the word barber, from its very meaning, is an inappropriate translation. A head-shaver goes by the Tajik name of *Sartarash; sar* = head, and *tarash* = shaver. There are many Shiites to be found in Bokhara, but they are people who have emigrated from Persia, never natives.

The Dervishes of Bokhara live in a settlement outside the town. With them long hair is obligatory, so they can easily be distinguished from their fellow-men. Questioned, they will tell you that Hagar's son, Ishmael, was the first dervish. Most of them live a life of celibacy; the married ones are those who have joined the order since their marriage. Another name for them is *Kalendar*, from *kalem* = ask, and *dar* = door, because it is their principal duty to beg, and beat at the doors at the same time. They are under the leadership of a dervish-in-chief, who keeps the bag and sends them all over the country to beg, receiving from them on their return all that they have collected during the journey. Sometimes he sends them to travel for a period of one or two years in Afghanistan, in Persia, in Khiva, or in Kashgar. His discipline is said to be very severe, a statement which is hard to believe when one meets them tearing along the streets in noisy troops, singing and shouting like men the worse for

drink; one might mistake them for male Bacchanals. I once tempted a party of five to let me photograph them by offering to each a silver coin, but the picture was not a success, as they could not be persuaded to stop singing and swaying their bodies backwards and forwards.

"What are they singing?" I asked.

"They are praising God," was the reply.

It is strange how much respect the people have for them, considering what a wild, worthless lot they apparently are. I have heard that most of them are dervishes because they are too lazy to work for their bread and prefer to live at the expense of others. They wear a peculiar kind of high cone-shaped cap, lined with black sheep's wool, which hangs down over forehead and neck, and mingles so completely with their lank, dishevelled hair that it is almost impossible to tell where one begins and the other ends. The upper part of the cap is usually covered with green or red velvet. As a money-box for collecting alms, the dervish carries in his right hand a gourd with one end cut off and replaced as a lid, while in his left hand he has always a staff with an iron ring let into the end, which can be used as a rattle to attract attention. His only visible garment is a patchwork of rags with numerous rents through which his bare flesh is partially visible. His feet are bare winter and summer, unless he indulges in a pair of dilapidated

slippers. Among other vices he is addicted to opium-eating, to which may be attributed the dazed, half-imbecile expression of his countenance. The native word for dervish, *dervana*, is also used, I may add—and not inappropriately—to designate an idiot.

Before the Russians came the poppy was widely cultivated in Turkestan, and opium dens were to be found in many of the towns. Happily that is now a thing of the past, and all opium consumed to-day on Russian territory has been smuggled there from India, Persia, or Bokhara, in which last, as the Amir does not object to it, it is still grown, chiefly in *Sharisab* ("Green City") and in *Khitab* ("Book City"), not far from Samarkand. There are several ways in which this drug is taken. They mix oil of opium, prepared in Persia, with their food, and it stupefies them. They also prepare it like tobacco, and smoke it in the *chilim*, or chew it in the form of a red pulp till all its juice has been extracted. A drink called *kuknar* is still sold in Bokhara, in shops set apart for the purpose, and known as *kuknar khanas*. It is a tea made from poppy-heads.

The Sarts in general, though not addicted to the use of opium, are very fond of *nas* or green tobacco. After it has been ground in mills, it is mixed with ashes, oil, and lime. This preparation they chew in great quantities. To those who are not used to it, it is a powerful narcotic, while those who have acquired the habit are its helpless victims. This

green mixture, sold in heaps in the bazaar, is one of the first sights to attract a foreigner's notice, for its shades of exquisite green, varying in depth according to the proportion of oil with which it is mixed, are particularly beautiful. Another variety is made of hemp or hasheesh. Though forbidden by both Mohammedan and Russian law, it still finds much favour with the natives.

Some three years ago the Russian colonists of Andijan had an unpleasant experience with regard to Sart fanaticism and the results it may lead to. There is—besides the Dervishes—a class of saintly men who live upon the piety of others; they are called *Ishans*, and their office it is to sit or stand and pray at street corners where passers-by can drop them alms. They dress in fine clothing, and are chiefly supported by men who, not liking the trouble of praying for themselves, are glad to find some one who will do it for them, and so make their share in Paradise secure. One of these *Ishans* who lived in Andijan had prospered to such a degree that he had even built a wooden mosque for his own use, and had it painted with gorgeous colours. Much of his time was spent in ecstasies, dreaming dreams and seeing visions—with the help of opium—till at last he got so great a hold on the simple people of Andijan that he persuaded them it was God's will that they should rise against the Russians and drive them from the land. The

conspiracy was carried out with such a degree of secrecy that the fanatics were able to surprise the Russian soldiers in their fortress and kill more than twenty of them in their sleep. It is true that, once the alarm given, the rising was quickly checked, but not until after every Russian woman and child had been placed in the fortress. A cross used to mark the spot where the twenty victims from the Russian garrison lay buried, and even till last year the affair was spoken of with bated breath, when that more terrible occurrence, the earthquake of December 1902, obliterated the memory of all minor troubles. The *Ishan* was put to death, and his mosque demolished; only the capital of one of the pillars has been preserved, and that is now in the museum at New Margelan. A mosque with such memories attached to it could not safely have been left standing amongst so fanatical a people.

There are no priests among the followers of Mohammed. The men whom travellers so often mistake for such are mullahs or holy men, who have spent many years of their life in the study of the Koran, and are thus qualified to officiate at religious ceremonies. Poor men cannot afford to have their sons trained for this profession, as it means a regular, though small, outlay for many years, with practically no return, and every mullah must be prepared to live on his own means. Mullahs officiating at circumcisions, marriages, and funerals

receive presents from the families concerned, but are seldom paid in money. There are various degrees of holiness among them. Those who aspire to the greatest sanctity never engage openly in trade, but most of them are glad to do a little business when the opportunity presents itself. All marry, and some of the richer ones have as many as five wives.

A Sart who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca enjoys a much greater degree of respect than is shown to his less fortunate neighbours. He has the right to be addressed as *Hadj*, and may wear a white *calat*. In old times the way to Mecca lay through Afghanistan and India, and at least two years had to be allowed for the journey, which was an extremely perilous one. Many pilgrims were robbed and many murdered in Afghan territory, whilst numbers died of cholera in India. Since the Russians opened their railway, pilgrims have found it a much easier route to go by way of Batoum, Constantinople, and Damascus. Now that facilities have so greatly increased, the number of pilgrims has grown larger in proportion. I learned from the Governor of Samarkand that at the present day upwards of ten thousand pilgrims start annually from each of the governments of which Russian Turkestan is composed. Each pilgrim carries a passport which must be *visée* at Constantinople; it is made out for six months. All who can do so aim to arrive in Mecca before the great feast which follows Ramazan,

in spite of the fact that a month of fasting on the way adds greatly to the fatigue of the journey. Hundreds die on the road, and nearly half fall sick or are robbed before they reach their destination. One never hears them complain, for they are forbidden to speak of any misfortune that may have befallen them coming or going.

"You have had ill luck," says the mullah, "but it was the will of God, and you must never speak of it."

When I asked an old man in Samarkand if he had been to Mecca he replied in the negative, but added, "I intend to go in the spring when my little grandson's hair is cut,[1] but I am old, I know I shall never return from that long journey."

However, the journey bids fair to become easier every year. Turkish engineers are already engaged in making a railway between Mecca and Damascus, but their work has been at a standstill of late because they considered themselves insufficiently paid.

On the walls of Sart houses I used often to see prints of Mecca; they were not a native production, but had come from one of the three centres of Mohammedanism, Constantinople, Bombay, or Kazan, unless, indeed, as I found more than once, they had been printed by unbelievers in St. Petersburg. Sir Richard Burton, in describing his pilgrimage

[1] A tress of hair had been allowed to grow at the back of the child's head as a token of a vow made by its parents at its birth. We often saw children with such tresses; their appearance reminded us of that of the Riffs in North Africa.

to Mecca, speaks of the baseless but world-wide calumny which declares that Islam recognises no soul in, and consequently no future for, the female sex. "The early Fathers," he says, "may have held such tenets, the Mohammedans never,"—and then he goes on to speak of the female pilgrims in whose company he travelled. Pilgrimesses (approaching Mecca) exchanged the *lisam*—that coquettish fold of thin white muslin which veils but does not hide the mouth—for a hideous mask of split, dried, and plaited palm-leaves, pierced with bull's eyes to admit the light. The ugly mask is worn because the veil must not touch the features. The rest of the outer garment is a long sheet of white cotton, covering the head and falling to the heels."

I have quoted these passages for two reasons: firstly, because the erroneous idea about Mohammed's opinion of women exists to this day in the minds of many of the Russian settlers in Turkestan; and, secondly, because the veil and outer dress described is still worn by the pilgrimesses from that country. When visiting a native house in Andijan I asked the Sart ladies if any of them had been to Mecca.

"No, we have not been there," was the response, "but there is a woman in the next house who has."

On my expressing a desire to see the pilgrimess, one of the men went in search of her, and she soon appeared. Her face was wrinkled and tanned, and she looked at least seventy, though she gave her age

as fifty-eight. It was a fine, sad face, down which the tears trickled as she talked to us of her long journey, and of the children she had left behind in her adopted home in Kashgar.

"I travelled with my brother," she said. "We passed through Stamboul, and spent one week in Jerusalem. Now I have come short of money and cannot rejoin my children, for to travel from Andijan to Kashgar takes ten days on horseback. I have already been five months travelling."

"Can you read?" we asked.

"No," she replied; "I went to Mecca that I might pray there."

"Are you glad you have been?" was our next question.

"Oh yes," she replied, laying her hand on her heart; "I am very glad."

It is strange that while a woman may go all the way to Mecca to pray, she is not permitted to join in any public worship at home, and must carry out all the prescribed rules for devotion in her own house. It is a mistake to think that women may not enter the mosques; they often stop on their way past them to go in and have a look round, when there are no men about. That the Sarts do not consider the interior of a mosque as holy ground is proved by the fact that, when no better sleeping accommodation has been available, the use of one as a lodging has sometimes been offered to

Russian officials. If the number of mosques in a town were to be taken as an indication of the piety of its inhabitants, visitors to Central Asia would truly be filled with awe, as there is one, if not more, in almost every street of any size or importance; even the villages are full of them; one near Kokand has for its eleven thousand inhabitants no less than twenty-five mosques. The method of building, described in a previous chapter, is not, of course, employed in the case of mosques and *medresses* which are built of properly baked brick.

Within the precincts of a mosque one often finds the tomb of some saint who had lived and died in the neighbourhood. The spot is marked by a long pole stuck in the ground and a horse's tail floating like a flag from the top. There is a wonderful vitality about these dead saints; they grow taller in their graves, some of which have to be lengthened periodically in consequence. The reader will perhaps be surprised to hear that the graves of Daniel, Noah, Solomon, and numerous other saints of Bible fame are to be found in Central Asian ground. Daniel grew to such an extent that his tomb, which is in the vicinity of Samarkand, now measures twice the original number of feet, and he would have gone on growing had not the Russian Government put a stop to him by building a wall to keep him within bounds. That wall was a rude shock to a

certain superstition of the Sarts—a belief that, as long as Daniel continued to grow, no foreigner would succeed in gaining complete possession of the land. The graves of even female saints are an extraordinary length. One near Askhabad, in Transcaspia, measures quite eighteen feet. Burton, who noticed this peculiarity in other Mohammedan countries, wrote: "The archæologist will remember that the great idol of Jeddah in the age of Arab lithology was 'a long stone.'"

Close to the burial-place of the Khans of Kokand there is an asylum, or school, for blind old men. They are taught to repeat long passages of the Koran by heart, in order that they may wander among the tombs and pray for the souls of the departed Khans; they also go about with a long staff, begging for alms. The gateway of their asylum is covered with tessellated work in imitation of that upon Tamerlane's beautiful monuments in Samarkand, but it only dates back to the time of the last Khan of Kokand, whose workmen had not the secret of the art, and, although it looks well from a distance, a nearer view shows it to be as miserable a failure as the decoration of the Khan's palace, a building now used as a Russian church. In Bokhara blind beggars walk the streets at nightfall, when there is no traffic. They call for alms as soon as they hear a step coming, and bless loudly those who give.

CHAPTER IX

SART COLLEGES

"Much of the soul they talked, and all awry."
—*Paradise Regained.*

EVERY book of travel in Central Asia has much to say on the subject of its imposing and historic *medresses*, but of their possible usefulness in the present day not a word has been said. The more recent ones have been built by private persons, and each has its own lands, on the revenues of which its professors and pupils manage to lead very comfortable lives. Many rich old men try to secure themselves happiness in the world to which they feel they are hastening, not merely by building *medresses*, but also by building houses on the rent of which these may be supported. All such pious legacies are known as *vakuf*; they are free of taxes, and represent quite a third of the State property. When a new *medresse* is opened in Bokhara, the chief magistrate of the town decides how many students it shall contain. Generally one student is allotted to each room, and more than two are never allowed. Married professors live outside the college, while each unmarried one has a room to himself. The rooms all open into a square, not altogether

unlike an Oxford "quad." Before he can gain admittance as a student a boy must have passed through the lower schools and have won a prize, which consists of 120 *tengas*, about £4, which sum is awarded to promising scholars on leaving. He must also have good recommendations, and be able to prove that he has means.

The income of a *medresse* is divided among the students in equal portions, the amount being regulated by the number of rooms, which varies from ten to forty, including accommodation for the professors, the servants, and a head-shaver, who always lives on the premises. The student does not spend all his time at one *medresse*, but passes through several until he has finished his course. Once admitted, he can remain a student for life. He may sell the income of his own particular *vakuf* to any one he likes, consequently many of the legacies are now in the hands of persons who are not students at all. The incomes range from eight shillings a year to twenty pounds. A student's attendance is not, as I have already remarked, restricted to the college in which he lives. He may go to lectures in any *medresse* he likes to select, and pays his fees to that professor whose classes he attends. The professors are nothing more than learned mullahs; their salaries depend upon the number of pupils they attract. A celebrated or a favourite professor gets as much as £600 yearly, but the ordinary run of teachers

content themselves with a much smaller sum. Occasionally a student's father pays down a certain sum on the boy's entrance. I talked with a youth in Kokand whose father had paid £30, his room's income was £2 a year, and he was free to stay there for the rest of his life if he chose. His father, who is a farmer, keeps him supplied with pocket-money.

"What is your profession to be?" I asked him.

"I don't know."

"How do you manage about food?"

"I and several other students join together and make a *pilau* at night; in the day we have bread, fruit, and tea."

I looked round his quarters as he spoke, and noticed that he had a good supply of apples and teapots in niches on the wall.

"How long have you been here?" I ask.

"Six years."

"Your life is an easy one, is it not?"

"No. Arabic is difficult."

"How many hours do you give to study?"

"I attend lectures in the *medresse* for three hours a day, and the rest of the time I study alone and prepare my work."

"Do you study at night?"

"No, I sleep,"—with a look of great surprise.

"Was it your own wish to come here?"

"No, my father wished it; my brother is a farmer."

"Your brother's occupation is the more arduous, is it not?"

In reply to this question the youth laughed, and two of his fellow-students who had joined us were shaking with laughter; they evidently agreed with me.

In the same *medresse* I had a conversation with one of the professors.

"Do you have examinations to test the progress of your pupils?" I asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "I examine them every day, and if I am not satisfied I do not give them another book."

"What are the subjects taught?"

"Theology, Philosophy, Persian, Arabic, and Turki."

"And what is the goal of your most successful pupils?"

"Our best pupils study for fifteen or twenty years till they can repeat whole books by heart, and are well versed in Arabic and Persian literature, then they take the post of *Imam*" (reciter of prayer in the mosques), "or *Suffi*" (the man who calls to prayer from the minaret), "or *Casi*" (a judge), "or *Alam*" (a man whose duty it is to explain the law to the judges, and who helps them to give an opinion when in doubt).

"Which of these professions is the most difficult?"

"That of a *casi*—you cannot get the post of a *casi* without influence."

"What happens to the rest of the students?"

"They become mullahs."

The Sarts despise all subjects of study except languages, theology, and Mussulman law. "More than once," says M. Nalivkin, "some learned native, on seeing history books in my house, has expressed a conviction that if I gave my time to that sort of reading it must be purely in the hope of discovering where treasures had been concealed."

A student's room is not a cheerful place. It is about sixteen feet square, and there is no light beyond that which can get through a small opening over the door, which is covered with paper and serves as a window; so it is not surprising that the young men spend as much of their time out of doors as possible. In one corner are a roll of bedding and some pillows, which, spread out on the rush matting, on which they sit by day, make a comfortable bed by night, while above there is a kind of loft in which drinking and cooking vessels are stored when not in use.

The professors, who are mullahs of the most learned type, are easily distinguished by the size of their spotless white turbans. Those worn by

their pupils are of the same kind, but much smaller. A mullah who has passed thirty years of his life in preparing himself to be a teacher thinks nothing of taking a year to expound the contents of a single book to his disciples. There is something inexpressibly sad in this decay of learning, this eternal "chewing the cud"—as some one has called it—of knowledge that has lost its savour, and can never repay the time that is wasted on its acquirement. The Russian administrators of Public Education, by whom the *vakuf* is now managed everywhere except in Bokhara and Khiva, are doing nothing even to repair the wonderful old fourteenth-century medresses, which are rapidly falling into decay. Yet there is no reason why, if in good hands, they should not yet become what they were originally intended to be, the life and light of the people. If the Czar were but to send one capable Russian to teach practical subjects in each medresse, students would flock to them from every part of the country, and there is no doubt but that these venerable institutions would soon be a self-supporting and valuable aid to the welfare of the people. The town of Bokhara alone contains one hundred and three of these colleges, calculated for the reception of ten thousand students. In Kokand there are eighty thousand Sart inhabitants and forty-eight medresses, but only two Russian primary schools. Among the pupils of these schools there are not



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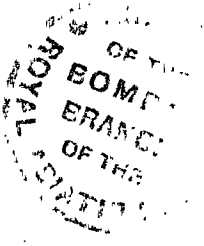
Photo by ANNETTE M. B. MEAKIN

A BEGGAR IN KOKAND

(Taken in the University "quad" with students and idle boys laughing at the author's taste)

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more than sixty Sart children. The best Sart families will not send their boys because the Mohammedan religion is not taught there; and even if they were to send them, they would learn only to read and write. The chief medresse in Kokand —Medresse *Djammi*—has fifteen hundred students, four *Mudharias*, or resident professors, and five *Mutevallis*, whose duty is to manage the finances. But how, to use the words of Carlyle, shall these professors give kindling in whose inward man there is no live coal?



CHAPTER X

SART SCHOOLS

WHENCE comes the hum of little voices that greets my ear as I am passing the side entrance of that crumbling and dilapidated mosque?

"This is a *maktab*, a school for beginners," explains my guide; "you can look in and see them at their work."

The room is packed with little boys, all sitting on the ground and rocking themselves to and fro as they sing in sleepy tones the verses they are learning. In their midst sits a mullah, their teacher, and he looks the sleepiest of all. The floor is covered with straw to keep the little feet from freezing, for the weather is cold. In front of each row of children lies a rough tree-trunk, which serves for both reading and writing desk. One sees much the same sight in other Mohammedan countries, yet it is not the same, for the dress of the little scholars is so different. While in Egypt and Morocco every small head is covered with a bright red fez, here the eye rests on a more pleasing picture; each child wears an artistically embroidered cap, and, though no two are alike, a wonderful blending of soft colours

is the result. So much was I struck with this on my first visit to a Sart school that I pondered more deeply on the remarkable understanding for colour, of which the caps were a proof, than on the method of instruction I had come there to inspect. Wishing to convey to my friends at home some idea of what it was impossible satisfactorily to describe, I resolved then and there to take home to England an assortment of these unique head-coverings, and I kept my resolution by purchasing, later on, at least twenty of them in the cap bazaar at Samarkand.

The sleepy-looking schoolmaster brightens up occasionally to give some inattentive pupil a warning tap with the end of a long stick he has in readiness. The books from which they are learning are lithographed, and have come all the way from Kazan, the ancient Tatár capital. School begins each morning as soon as the second prayer is over, and goes on till sunset, with a pause in the middle of the day for lunch, which consists of a piece of bread and a little fruit, which each child has brought with him. The school week begins on Saturday morning and ends on Thursday evening. There is no distinction of classes in Sart schools, children of rich and poor learn side by side; the very poor never send their children to school at all. The schoolmaster gets no regular salary; he subsists on what the parents see fit to give him in the way of presents. When a boy has progressed so far as to be able to

read the Koran his father presents the mullah with a *calat*, the equivalent of which with us would be a new coat. It is also customary for the pupils to bring their master weekly presents of bread, fruit, or some other article of food.

In hot weather school goes on in the open air, some shady corner being chosen outside the mosque, or in the courtyard of the teacher's house. The boys are first taught the alphabet, after which they are set to copy out and learn by heart selected passages from the Koran. When the pupil can read and copy out a book, besides knowing the greater part of its contents by heart, he is considered sufficiently advanced to begin the study of another volume. As soon as he has thus mastered six or seven books his education, as far as the *maktab* is concerned, is over. As there is only one master to each school, there is no separation into classes. One shouts his A B C at the top of his voice, while another recites a piece of poetry, and another a passage from the Koran. It is marvellous that anything is learnt at all, considering the noise that goes on all the time. Sometimes, however, the master reads aloud and the pupils listen. A Russian officer in Namangan told me that on his once finding a master engaged in reading to his pupils, that pedagogue had explained to him, "It is a Persian book that I am reading, and I can read it quite fluently though I do not understand a word."

Many Russians living in Turkestan had assured me that such a thing as a girls' school did not exist among the Sarts, so that I was surprised to find, on inquiry among the Sart ladies of the higher class, that each had been to school in her time, and that some had even kept up their studies, such as they were, after marriage. When visiting the wife of the chief judge in Samarkand, I inquired of that lady whether she was fond of reading.

"My wife has read more than two thousand books," said her husband, answering for her; "she reads when she is sad."

This certainly looked like an indication that her life was not a very cheerful one, but I let that pass and merely inquired at what school she had been educated.

"At her mother's school," was the reply. "Her mother is a learned woman, who in her time had a learned mother, who also kept a school."

The profession of schoolmistress passes down from mother to daughter. When a schoolmistress has no daughter of her own, she trains one of her pupils to help her when she grows old, and take her place when she dies.

Having heard me express a desire to visit the judge's mother-in-law and inspect her school, my friends took me there the following day. In a primitive verandah opening into a courtyard in which cows and hens were wandering at large, I found the

children at their lessons. They were not all girls; there were several boys among them, including the judge's two little sons. The girls did not wear caps like the boys, but brightly-coloured handkerchiefs tied round their heads in such a manner that an end hung down behind one ear. There were fifteen children in all; they sat in couples, two in front of one book, with their legs tucked away out of sight. Some of the books rested on flat stones, others on little desks made of crossed pieces of wood. Each child held a pointer in its hand.

"If you see a book resting on the ground," said my guide, "you will know that it is not a Koran, for that must never touch the ground."

One of the little girls could not have been more than four years old. Seeing that we noticed this child, the old schoolmistress explained that she was not yet a pupil, being too young, but that she was brought to school every day that she might accustom her ears to the sound of what she would have to learn herself later on.

"She will learn very quickly when she once begins," added the old lady.

"I do not teach for the sake of money," she went on to say, "but for the sake of the good God. No one pays me anything, but each pupil brings a small offering every week—sometimes a log of wood for the fire, sometimes a chicken."

"May I take a photograph of your school?" I asked.

"Yes," replied she, "but it would be wrong to make a picture of me. You must not put me in on any account, but I do not mind standing by the children to keep order."

So, for the first time in Sart history, a girls' school has been photographed, and the old lady is there too, but she does not know it. She afterwards invited us into her house, and we had a long talk with the aid of a lady interpreter.

"I have four children," she said; "for, besides my own son and daughter, I have adopted two orphan girls, in order that when I am old and die, they may bury me and pray God to bless me out of gratitude."

> *οἳ γηροβοσκησουσι καὶ θανόντα σε*
> *περιστελοῦσι και προθησονται νεκρον.*

Her history was interesting. She had been a great beauty in her youth. Her wedding had taken place, she told us, on the very day on which Samarkand fell into the hands of the Russians (1868).

"We had to hurry over the ceremony because they were entering the town," she said.

Yet it was not until her daughter was married to the judge, five years ago, that she ever came in contact with a European; she had never been in the street since her marriage. Her son-in-law's position had necessitated his inviting certain Russian officials to his wedding.

"Would you like to travel and see the world, as we are doing?" I asked.

"The desire is not permitted to us," she replied gravely. "We may read about the world, and that is enough; why should we wish to see things for which we have no understanding?"

"Do you read much?" I asked.

"I read a great deal until I reached the age of fifty-one," she said. "After that I left off reading poetry and worldly books, and gave my attention to the Koran and prayers. It becomes an old woman like me to occupy herself only with the care of her soul."

As we rose to go, she sent one of the children for a handkerchief, and, filling it with apples, begged our acceptance of them.

"But we must not carry away your handkerchief," we said.

"Yes, I want you to take the handkerchief too," was her rejoinder. "Throw it in a corner when you get home, and then, if you forget, it will remind you of me."

While staying in Kokand we had the opportunity of visiting another interesting girls' school. As we entered I noticed that, for a wonder, all the children seemed to be reading aloud in unison.

"What is it they are reading?" was my first question.

"They are reading the story of one of Mohammed's

sons, and how he was murdered in the desert," was the answer.

The schoolmistress who sat in their midst was as charming an old lady as the one in Samarkand, but of quite another type. She wore a light blue stuff handkerchief tied over her forehead in the shape of a cone, her head and chin were wrapped in white muslin, and over all was a pair of spectacles, which made her look very wise indeed. She was quite pleased to see us come in, hurried some of her pupils out of the way to make room for us on the floor, and talked intelligently about her work.

"To-day," she said, "I am teaching my pupils how God gave a law to Mohammed that prayer should be said five times a day, and how the Prophet's breath had a sweet scent after his interview with his Creator."

"How many pupils have you?" I asked.

"Forty-five just now. The parents of each pay me according to their means. They do not pay in money, but give me clothes. As soon as a pupil has mastered two lines of her book I receive a present."

"How long do they take to learn two lines?"

"About a month if they are intelligent. The whole course is five years, but dull boys stay eight. Some girls leave to be married at the age of nine; the boys go from here to boys' schools occasionally, and one or two have gone to the Russian school."

When we put questions about herself, she told us that she was the daughter of a mullah, that one of her sons dealt in native goloshes, another was a tailor, and a third a student in Bokhara, having taken a passport for one year; he was to be a mullah. In the summer he would have four months' holiday, during which time he would return to Kokand, and either work in the fields or get employment in some shop. Wishing to test her powers, I asked her to write a sentence in Sart characters on a piece of native paper which lay in front of her. She picked it up at once and wrote a line. I took it away with me and afterwards showed it to a Russian who had made a study of the Sart language.

"That is very well written," he exclaimed, and he translated the sentence as follows:—

"My school has had visitors to-day."

I thought much more of this than if it had been a quotation from the Koran (as I had taken for granted it would be), for it proved her capable of expressing her own thoughts quickly and easily upon paper. Before leaving I examined the school ink-bottles, and found that each contained a sponge soaked in Indian ink diluted with water, a most practical arrangement, for in that form there was no fear of its being spilt. The reed pens were of the usual Eastern kind.

Caligraphy is a very important part of the Sart's

education, and a good handwriting has made more than one man famous. In place of our copy-books the pupil is provided with a sentence or two of wisdom, written on parchment. A Russian friend, who has been making a collection of these, kindly gave me the translations of several. One is a quatrain composed by a celebrated caligraphist, Mir Ali by name.

"I have spent the last thirty years of my life in the exercise of writing. Now my name will remain throughout eternity, thanks to my caligraphy. My pen leaves behind it the memory of a remarkable handwriting. It is from the king that I have receive my title, 'The Reed of Musk.'

(Signed) "MIR ALI OF HÉRAT
(May grace be upon him)
The Royal Scribe."

Mir Ali was a native of Hérat. He was educated at Meshed, under another famous caligraphist, Zain Eddin. In the year 1517 he passed from Khorassan to Maveronnahr, and lived there till his death, when he was buried in the mosque of Saif Eddin. He is known in Turkestan under the name of Hadja Fath Haboth. During his lifetime his reputation was so great that if a beggar came to him for alms he had only to write the letter *Alif* on a slip of paper and the beggar had no difficulty in realising a good price for it.

The following copy-book maxims are also among our friend's collection:—

"Select thy friends from among the capable and the intelligent."

"Avoid stupid and ignorant men."

"Place not thy confidence in women, even if they appear to be trustworthy."

"Prove thy words by thy actions."

"Seek to learn of men who are successful in life."

"Consider thy youth a great blessing, and occupy it in preparing for the next world."

"Be open with thine enemies as well as with thy friends."

"Look upon him who is thy teacher as the best of fathers."

"Regulate thy expenses according to thy income."

"Always avoid extremes."

"Treat in a becoming manner the guests thou hast invited."

"Is it not known that everything which falls among salt changes itself to salt after a certain length of time? If, then, thou art desirous that thy name should resound from the sky above to the uttermost bounds of the earth, take a vow that thou wilt enter the service of eminent men, be it only for a few days of thy life."

CHAPTER XI

CHILDHOOD

BABIES are laid in long, narrow cradles, above which a horizontal rod is fixed lengthwise ; over the rod a thick shawl is hung, and you wonder how the little creatures manage to breathe, for there is no visible opening. The first cradle I saw was in Bokhara; it roused my curiosity, and wondering what the thing could be, I pointed to it inquiringly, little dreaming that it contained a baby. Great was my astonishment when the proud mother turned back the shawl and lifted her treasure out. What a strange little creature it looked. Though only a few months old, it had on an embroidered cap, as varied in its colours as any I had seen in the bazaar, while its little silk robe was a miniature of that worn by its father, the same material, and the same loose sleeves. As it began to cry, an older woman with a haggard face, but with the traces of former beauty still about her, stepped forward and took the child from its mother's arms. Poor thing, though now but a servant in the household, she too had been brought to it as a wife. When a child falls ill a mullah is sent for, in order that he may read passages from the Koran over it, and charm away its sickness.

At one house I saw this going on. An attendant had the child in his arms while the mullah, holding a *tesbih*, or rosary, over its head, mumbled away for some time. The father, who was pouring out tea for us at the other end of the room, took the matter very coolly, and when we questioned him about the little invalid, indicated that he had no doubt whatever as to the cure being effectual. A little later I saw the infant in the mother's arms. She did not seem to have quite as much faith, and was looking anxiously into its face to see if the mullah had really done it any good.

The back of a Sart's head is invariably flat, but this can hardly be taken as an indication of character, even by phrenologists, as it is to be accounted for by the fact that as a baby he was laid on his back for hours together on a hard, unyielding cotton quilt. It is the same with the women, though one remarks it less because of their long hair.[1]

Families are often very numerous, sixteen children is not an unusual number for one mother, but she seldom rears more than half of them. I have even heard of a family of twenty-five.[2] Many young mothers die, and their babies too, for want of a

[1] Since writing the above my attention has been drawn to an interesting article in *Man* (January 1902), entitled "Head-shaping in the Punjaub." There seems to be some doubt as to whether the shape of the skull *flat behind* is artificial or not. In Turkestan I should not call it artificial, but a result of circumstances.

[2] My informant was the medical assistant at one of the Russian hospitals for natives.

skilled woman to attend to them; but the Russian Government is endeavouring to remedy this evil, and I trust the time will soon come when there will be a sufficient number of trained nurses. A large proportion of children die because their girl-mothers have no notion how to look after them. This state of things the Government is also hoping to stop by inducing the natives not to marry their daughters till they are old enough to understand a mother's duties. This will be a more difficult matter, for both the father who cares for the welfare of his daughter, and the father who wants to make money out of her, will be running great risks if they defer her marriage. The former, by doing so, may find that some one had run off with the girl before he has got her safely married, whilst the latter may have her left on his hands altogether. A Sart proverb says, "Do not keep salt long or it will get damp. Do not keep a young girl or she will spoil." An ambitious father who kept his daughter at home to the age of twenty-three in the hope of her making a specially good match, returned home one day to find that she had eloped with a Tatár.

At the birth of a girl there is always some disappointment, and a woman will often hide the truth from her husband as long as possible. Nalivkin tells of a case where a man, having been informed by the ladies of his household that his child was a boy, when it was really a girl, invited all his friends

and acquaintances to come and rejoice with him at the birth of a son. Refreshments had been ordered and the guests were there when the father was told the truth, whereupon he had nothing for it but to explain his disappointment to the assembled guests and send them away. A child is washed as soon as it is born, but often not again for three weeks, as there is an idea that washing will hinder its growth. It is to this neglect that many of the diseases found among native children may be attributed. When a child has completed its first year, the father shaves off all its hair except two little tufts over its ears. When these grow long they are plaited, and, if it is a girl, an amulet or a string of coral is attached to the ends. Until she is seven years old a girl's head is shaved regularly, but after that the hair is allowed to grow. When a boy wears these plaits after five years of age it is because his parents have made some vow in connection with him which has not yet been fulfilled. The pretty little sons of the judge in Samarkand had long tresses of hair attached to their gold-embroidered velvet caps, and terminating in silver tassels, but underneath, their tiny heads were shorn as bare as billiard balls. Their father saw me take hold of one of these raven tresses, with a puzzled look on my face, and hastened to explain.

"It is woman's hair bought in the bazaar," he said, with a satisfied smile.

Mothers often nurse their children till they are

three and four years old. When a baby is six days old its father decides what it shall be called, and gives the name to a mullah, who repeats it over the infant in a prayer. The circumcision takes place at any age between four and twelve. The ceremony is always an expensive one to the parents, as all their relatives and friends expect to be handsomely entertained on such an occasion.

Until she is nine years old a girl is allowed almost as much freedom as her brothers, and she is even allowed to play with them in the street. After that she is strictly confined to the women's quarters, and her parents begin to keep a sharp watch upon her movements. If her father gives her money to buy sweets, she can no longer go herself to choose them in the bazaar, but must keep the coin safely folded in her girdle till she can persuade her brother or her grandmother or some aged neighbour to get them for her.

A Sart boy, if his parents can afford it, goes first to school and then to college, as I have pointed out in a previous chapter; but if he comes of a poor family he leaves school at the age of ten or twelve to be apprenticed to his father, if he is a tradesman, or to make himself useful in the fields if his father is engaged in agriculture. In his spare time he is free to go where he likes, and the place of his choice is invariably the street or the bazaar. But he is not always idle, and while his sister earns money with

her silkworms he often keeps fowls and makes something by selling the eggs. I have travelled in many Eastern countries, but nowhere have I found myself surrounded by such swarms of boys as in Turkestan. I had but to pause for a few minutes in a bazaar or public square, or even at a street corner, and a juvenile crowd of huge proportions would immediately gather round me. Surely the hours of youth must hang heavily on their hands! So much for Sart boyhood. Girlhood, on the other hand, such as we understand by the word, hardly exists here. Often before his daughter is twelve years old the father contemplates her marriage, and begins to look round for a suitable husband. Yet her life is not without its interest whilst the choice of a husband is pending. The innate love of trade peculiar to her people is as strong in her as in her brothers. Before she is ten years old she has usually begun to hatch silkworms' eggs in the folds of her dress, and when the cocoons are ready she sells them for what she can get. The money thus earned is her very own, and she can do what she likes with it. Sometimes she buys finery with her savings, but oftener than not she lays out her money in a larger supply of eggs for the following year, or invests it in bright skeins of silk and caps to be embroidered.

In Kokand we visited the wife of a golosh-maker; her bright, intelligent face comes up before me as I

write. Though only fourteen years of age and the mother of a child two months old, she had earned a considerable sum of money in her short life, and bade fair to earn a good deal more. Her two arts were embroidering caps and copying books. So fascinated were we with this clever little woman that we persuaded her to let us buy the cap on which she was at work, to keep in memory of our visit. She brought out for our inspection a book that she had just finished copying, which was to be sold in the bazaar. It was beautifully done; not a blot or a correction could we find. Its title was, "History of the Young Daughter of a Khan." With regard to such books, I remember an interesting evening spent with a family in Old Margelan. While we were all seated cosily round a low table, with our feet over the charcoal and the quilted table-cover drawn up to our chins, I happened to ask one of the ladies present whether she was fond of reading, and was surprised to see the alacrity with which, instead of replying to my question, she jumped up from the floor, and, reaching a pile of books from a niche in the wall, brought them for me to look at.

"This book," she said, taking up one of the volumes, "is a very interesting one; it is about a pasha who wanted to marry a girl, and she refused to have him."

Then she sat down in her former place, covered her knees once more with the quilt, and began to

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read aloud, while the girl who sat next her looked over her shoulder and read with her. It was really a very pretty duet. On and on they read, so interested in the story that they seemed to forget our presence entirely. Together their young voices rose and fell in softest cadence, and together they paused at the end of each paragraph, till one felt they must have made a special study of reading in unison; yet no idea of show or effect seemed to enter their heads for a moment. They were deep in a love-story—that was all. On and on they read till at last I was obliged to stop them, that they might explain the plot of the tale before it was time for us to go. I jotted down the words as my interpreter gave them to me, but as I was not a little shocked at the immorality of its sentiments I shall not give it here.

The young women in Tashkent spend a great deal of time in working their dowry coverlets. A coarse canvas-like material is worked all over with rounds of closely filled-in stitches in crimson silk, with a little black introduced here and there. These rounds are sometimes nearly a foot in diameter, and the more there are of them, and the closer they are together, the greater the value of the coverlet. The effect is extremely handsome, and now that they have reached the Moscow markets there is a great demand for them. Girls are beginning to embroider them rather for sale than for the decoration of their own homes, consequently the work put into them is greatly

inferior, as there is less personal interest in the labour. In more than one home I came across coverlets of which the embroidery had never been completed; the explanation being that the wedding had taken place before the bride and her friends could finish it. Sometimes too the work comes to a standstill for want of silk, and the bride, if too poor to buy it, has to do other work in between, that she may sell it in the bazaar and thus get money with which to buy silk. Rich brides often have two, and three, of these coverlets. They are sometimes used as prayer carpets.

"Did you design this yourself?" I asked of one lady who was showing me her treasures.

"No," she replied, "*she* did that part of it," and she pointed as she spoke to an aged crone who sat huddled up in a distant corner. When they have no one in the house who is clever enough to draw a pattern, they send for a woman whose profession it is to do that kind of work.

Besides hatching silkworms' eggs the women also spin their own silk, but this is chiefly in Old Margelan; in fact I came across very few household spinning-wheels elsewhere. Since so many foreigners have settled in the country for the purpose of silkworm culture, the price of cocoons has been reduced by half. Even Russian ladies used not to disdain making a little money in the egg-hatching line, but now it hardly repays them.

A woman often finds it difficult to procure a

regular supply of mulberry leaves when her eggs are hatched, for she can seldom go out to fetch them, and her men-folk are not always willing to go for her. Nalivkin tells us that when a lazy husband refuses to fetch leaves, his wife scolds him and threatens that if he will not go she will sell his best clothes and buy leaves for herself. She assures him that her worms are of far greater value than he is.

"It always ends," continues Nalivkin, "in the husband getting the leaves."

Plain sewing, such as we understand it, is done by the Sart women in a very bungling fashion, whereas their embroidery could hardly find its superior. Kokand work in particular fetches a high price all over Central Asia, as well as in the shops of Moscow. Embroidery is the one kind of work they are allowed to do on a Friday. The thimble is worn on the third finger instead of on the second as with us.

It is only amongst the very lowest classes that women engage in agricultural work. They never dig the ground. Once, in the Dolomites, I watched an old lady of sixty-seven dig up a whole turnip-field unaided. Such a sight would be a surprise to the Sarts, for even their neighbours the muscular and powerful Kirgiz women limit themselves to the lighter kinds of work. Sart women go into the cotton-fields with their children to pick the pods,

but they have to be on the watch all the time, for the approach of a stranger would necessitate the pulling down of their horsehair veil, which is tucked back under the *parandja* while they are at work. No husband or father ever forces a woman to go and work in the fields, because the Mohammedan law says that she must stay at home. I used often to find the old women, who were too infirm for active work in the house, engaged in taking cotton from the pods and spreading it out on the ground ready to be sewn into quilts. In Japan this work is entrusted to younger and more active women, and the quilts are much less lumpy in consequence.



CHAPTER XII

SART WOMEN

"I have been frequently asked since my return—it is a question which an Englishman always seems to ask first—what the women of Bokhara were like. I am utterly unable to say. I never saw the features of one between the ages of ten and fifty."—CURZON.

"DO you consider the Sarts to be a people with a future?" was a question I put to one of the most thoughtful of my Russian acquaintances.

"They can have no future as long as their women are veiled," was the reply. "Russia should have commanded them to unveil their women from the first; now it would be a more difficult matter."

"You seem to forget," he continued, "that Russia's own women were veiled till Peter the Great put a stop to it; they had their separate reception-rooms, just as the Sarts have to-day."

"It will take more than one Peter the Great to set the world to rights," I mused, as a shapeless mass in jack-boots hurried past me. Could that unsightly object really be a woman? Yes, it was, but whether a beautiful girl in her teens or a shrivelled-up crone, it was impossible to say.

One day I was conversing with a venerable

white-bearded professor from one of the Kokand colleges.

"Why do your women wear those black horse-hair veils?" I asked him.

"Mohammed's daughter wore a black veil," he replied.

"But I have visited many Mohammedan countries," I objected, "and saw no other women wearing them."

"They conceal the face in other ways," he replied, "but the black veil covers more surely."

The last statement was one I could not contradict.

Gentle male reader! You shall now come with me in spirit where, in the flesh, you will never be permitted to enter. We will go together to the only place where a respectable Sart woman may be seen without a veil—her home.

. . . . . .

Every Sart house has two courtyards, round which respectively the men's and the women's apartments are built. These are entirely separate one from the other, and there is only one door or passage to connect the two. There are no windows looking into the street, and a low and unpretending doorway is the only entrance of which even the wealthiest houses can boast. The rooms are open to the courtyard on one, and sometimes on two sides, so there is plenty of light and air. As one

who is peculiarly sensitive as to any want in this respect, I have no hesitation in saying that, out of every sixty native houses, rich and poor taken together, only one, on an average, will be found in which the air is not perfectly fresh and sweet. I do not know a single European town of which such a statement would be true. It is not because the Sarts are cleaner or more scrupulous in their habits than Europeans. The first piece of information the traveller receives about these people from the foreigners dwelling in their vicinity is, "*Ils sont si salles!*" A visit to the home of any one of the Russian peasants who have emigrated to Turkestan will sufficiently prove that it is not the climate alone that is responsible for this happy state of things, but rather the absence of window-panes and tightly-closed doors. How can the air be stale when it is continually changing? Sart doors are made of poplar wood, which, for reasons already explained, is very unsuited for the purpose; it soon warps, and a native door that will shut properly is an exception. Added to this, there is often a small opening in the roof for ventilation.

Whenever we visited at a native house our host would meet us in the courtyard, and, after a friendly greeting, conduct us to what we might call his dining-room. A handsome Bokhara carpet generally covered the floor if the house was a rich

one; in poorer dwellings a cheaper carpet, from Kashgar, took its place, while the lowest classes contented themselves with a rush mat, or even the bare mud floor. In some houses that had been partially Russianised we found European chairs, tables, beds, lamps, and even Russian stoves built into the wall. The last were there merely for show in most cases, for, as the owners of one explained to us, the heat from them gave them such dreadful headaches. It is, however, with the non-Russianised homes that we have now to deal, and in these the men's rooms have no furniture except a few folded cotton quilts on which to sit. The ceilings are covered with roughly-cut saplings, or narrow boards cut to represent them; the lower classes use reeds. These are supported by rough cross-beams about a yard apart. It is now becoming the fashion to whitewash walls and ceilings, but in purely native houses they are often painted with the most brilliant colours. In Fergana we seldom saw painted walls; but in Bokhara, where there is so much of the Persian element, the designs upon the walls were a study in themselves. Trees with flowers larger than life spread out in a fan shape and reached nearly to the ceiling. They were often represented as springing from a teapot, which rather astonished me at first, but I soon discovered that his teapot is very dear to the Sart, and the sight of it ever pleasant to his eye.

While three walls of a room are painted in this way, the fourth is invariably fitted up with numerous small niches in which many little household treasures can be stowed away. The niches in poorer dwellings are built within the wall, of the same clay, and, being the same colour as the mud in the streets, have a very earthy appearance; but rich people have them of painted, and often of carved wood.

Sart houses are built entirely on the ground floor, partly from fear of earthquakes. It is true indeed that I visited at a house with an upper storey in Samarkand (where there was a serious earthquake only three years ago, sufficiently violent to set the church bells ringing and fill the air with dust), but in that case the owner had had special provocation, as he carefully explained to us—his first wife quarrelled so much with the new one that he had been obliged to give each a floor to herself. The old wife, I may add, occupied the ground floor.

Our host generally knew beforehand that it was the ladies of his household for whom our visit was chiefly intended. Nevertheless, native rules of etiquette and the ingrained objection of his race to anything like hurry, invariably led him to detain us awhile in his own reception-room, after which he would either go himself to prepare the ladies or send a little boy to do so. A few minutes more



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WIVES OF A WEALTHY SART

(Taken in their own courtyard)

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would pass, and then some aged hag, with her face bound up in a cloth like the pictures one sees of Lazarus in his grave-clothes, would look out of a kind of stable door and beckon to us. The first time this happened I began to think I should find the poor ladies living in the stables, especially when the old woman led us down a dark passage between heaps of rubbish and shavings. However, we found ourselves at last in a cheerful courtyard, quite equal to that belonging to the men.

The size of the women's rooms, the quality of the carpets, as also the quality of the clothes and of the jewellery they wore, corresponded as a rule with the wealth of the husband. When a Sart builds himself a Russian house he generally thinks the old one good enough for his wives, and so leaves them there; partly for that reason, but also because, as the new house is built solely for the entertainment of his gentleman friends, it would be impossible to bring the women and children into it without considerably increasing its size. So long as the women are doomed to live in seclusion I see nothing unreasonable in this arrangement, but a Russian lady friend, when pointing out such a house to me, remarked: "That fine house was built by a Sart! Would you believe it? But the ladies, poor things, have no share in its comforts, they are still imprisoned in the old one; anything seems to be good enough for them."

Even their worst enemies admit that it would be hard to beat the Sarts in their generous and open-hearted hospitality. I do not think we ever entered a house without having some token of welcome set before us. If we were expected, the *dasturkan*, or time-honoured tray of fruits, sweets, and nuts, would invariably await our arrival. The richer our host the greater the spread. The fruits varied according to the season of the year. In winter we found apples, pears, pomegranates, and grapes; while in autumn plums, figs, and apricots took the place of the first three. In early summer uncooked rhubarb is offered to the guests. The sweets are heaped on plates and saucers in great profusion, native sweets made with mutton fat, and tasting so strongly of it that few Europeans care to try them twice, and caramels supplied by a Russian *bonbon* factory at Tashkent. Pistachios are always there, and other nuts according to the season. In summer we found the *dasturkan* laid out upon the floor, but in winter it was usually placed upon a low square table covered with a thick cotton quilt. The table stood at one end of the room, where there was no carpet, over a square hole built in the floor, just as in Persia, to serve as a fireplace, and containing a brazier filled with live charcoal. Folded quilts were placed round the table, and upon these we were cordially invited to sit. We soon learned to make ourselves quite

at home, and, following the example of the ladies of the household, used to push our toes under the table and draw the quilt over our knees. On frosty days the genial warmth was particularly acceptable, and the ladies, finding that we did not treat them as strangers, would chatter away with much less restraint when we were all seated in this way. As there are very few Russian ladies in Turkestan who can speak the Sart language, I was usually obliged to take with me a female interpreter from the local hospital. The women who occupy these posts are nearly always Tatárs of the lower class, and though they think themselves greatly superior to the Sarts, their manners often leave a great deal to be desired. Although we paid them well for their services, they were determined to make a little more than we gave them, by eating from every dish that had been provided in our honour, and, finally, by filling their handkerchiefs with as much as they could possibly carry away. During Ramazan, as they could not eat till sunset, they made up for it by sweeping the contents of half the dishes into their laps. The behaviour of one of these wretches was so atrocious that I refused to take her with me a second time, and thus ran the risk of having no one to interpret. Luckily for me the mounted policeman who had been told off to accompany me could speak Russian. He was not allowed, of course, to come into the presence of the ladies, but,

by standing outside the half-closed door, could converse with their husband, and repeat his remarks in Russian to us.

The reception-room of a Sart lady is at the same time her living-room and her bedroom, yet there is seldom in it more than one piece of furniture—a metal-bound trunk, smaller by far than that with which her American sister would set out to cross the "herring pond." Thousands of such trunks are now manufactured annually in Moscow for sale in the bazaars of Turkestan. They are distinguishable from those of native make by their gaudy colouring. In a house in Andijan I came across a beautifully made mulberry-wood trunk, more than a hundred years old, and greatly superior in colour and workmanship to the imported ones. The trunks were often opened for our benefit, and gorgeous silken robes and flashing but often worthless jewellery were displayed before our admiring eyes. Their owners would show them to us with evident pleasure, and were nothing loath to don their finery that I might photograph them in it.

At one end of the room there was always a great pile of neatly folded quilts and pillows. The quilts were spread out at night to serve as beds. The pillows were stuffed with articles of clothing, and served as wardrobes. There was usually a cord or a pole across one corner of the room, which served as a clothes-line with the rich, and as a

larder with the poor. In the former case it was covered with garments in daily use—silk costumes, embroidered handkerchiefs, and such like. One wall had always its niches for teapots and small household articles such as we have already seen in the men's quarters.

"I suppose you give all your cast-off clothes to the poor?" I said to the wife of a wealthy official, when I had vainly tried to conjecture where any article of clothing that was neither among the treasures in the trunk nor on her back could possibly be stowed away—I had not yet discovered the secret of the pillows.

"Oh no," was her reply; "we tear them up and use them as dusters and dish-cloths."

I tried several times to photograph interesting interiors, but gave it up at last in despair, for the most typical ones had no windows, and all the light that entered came through a doorway so low that we had to stoop to enter.

When a young lady came forward to welcome us, she would cast down her eyes and look very bashful. Pretended shyness is thought "good form," the idea being that the test of a virtuous woman is the seclusion in which she lives, and, consequently, the shyness she feels at meeting strangers. I noticed that the higher the rank of the lady the more bashful she appeared to be. The wife of the chief magistrate in Samarkand

could never once be induced to open her lips in our presence; her husband did all the talking for her. He informed me that her high position did not allow of her paying any visits, though she could receive the ladies of the town in her own house. If a husband finds a pair of shoes outside his wife's door he may not enter, no, not even if the shoes look big enough to hold a man's foot. Ladies could not do any visiting at all but for this rule. The qualities that a Sart prizes most highly in a woman are the love of staying at home and the love of work. A Sart in Namangan told me his wife had not been outside her courtyard more than once during the past year, and that was only because her mother was very ill and wanted to see her. "And then," he added, "she did not go on foot, but in an *arba*. No real ladies ever go on foot."

While we have been chatting round the *dasturkan* one of the family has been preparing tea. The water has been heated either in the charcoal fire round which we are sitting, or in another in an adjoining apartment. A graceful, long-necked copper or brass vessel takes the place of our practical but ugly kettle, and, though it may be black with smoke, it still retains its elegance of form. Another vessel, similar to it in shape, though made of brass and elaborately chiselled, serves as teapot, but the tea is often put straight into the water as it comes off the fire, and then

served in small basins a little larger than those used in Japan; these are mostly imported from Kashgar. Now the *chilim* or gourd-pipe is handed round, and each person present, ourselves excepted, takes a whiff. Our host then takes us to inspect the rest of the house, and the courtyard, in which we find a bread oven built into the wall, and near it a supply of copper and iron drinking-vessels. A false ceiling of rough planks forms a sort of loft above the outer apartment of the women's quarters, and here are stored the fruits that are destined to last through the winter. Underneath are clay jars containing rice, *kunchuk*, and a green seed called *mash*, used for making a kind of porridge.

The ancient hag who introduced us to the ladies' household is busy preparing *kababs* for dinner. Let us watch her a minute. First she chops up some mutton into little pieces half the size of her thumb. By her side is a pile of skewers; on each of these she sticks a piece of mutton and a piece of fat alternately; then she takes them, six at a time, and balances them across a brazier of glowing charcoal. The children stand round her and eat the frizzling *kababs* from the skewers as fast as they are cooked. Watching them at their feast with skewer in one hand and bread in the other, one feels tempted to join the party.

The heavy work of the household is nearly always done by the grandmammas. After middle age a

woman seems to grow more active with every year of her life. In one courtyard we found the host's three mothers-in-law engaged in bread-making. A native oven is like a great clay jar with no bottom and a round opening in its side. It is bought ready in the bazaar, and has only to be built into the wall and plastered over with mud, except at its two openings. To prepare it for bread-baking, a fire is lit inside and allowed to burn itself out; then the ashes are taken away, and the oven is ready. We watched two of the energetic old ladies clapping flat cakes of bread on to the inner walls of their strange-looking oven; a little water having been first sprinkled over the dough, it stuck to the hot sides till cooked through. The third mother-in-law had her sleeves tucked up above the elbow and was vigorously kneading. By her side stood a sort of tub full of flour. This is perhaps a fitting place to remark that some of the finest features we looked upon in Central Asia were those of old Sart women. There is a look of noble resignation on some of their aged faces that, coupled with their well-defined features and dignified presence, is often most attractive.

A mother often slips into the position of general servant to her daughter from the day of the girl's marriage. There have been cases where the mother has gone down on her knees before her daughter on the wedding-day and entreated her to forgive her for any harshness she may have shown to her as a

child, so great has been her fear that her daughter, in revenge, would make her work too hard, and so render her life unbearable.

Every courtyard has a muddy canal running through it. Sometimes, when it is close to a door, it has a rough bridge of planks thrown across it. The water looks, and is, unspeakably dirty, yet the children do not hesitate to stoop and drink from it when thirsty; indeed, it is the only available water-supply for drinking or cooking purposes. The diseases that result from the use of such impure water will be described later on.

Every pious Mohammedan must wash face and hands five times a day. Not seeing any arrangement for washing in the first house I entered in Tashkent, I asked my hostess where she performed her ablutions. In answer she rolled up one end of the handsome rug on which we were reclining, and pointed to a sink in the floor, which it concealed.

"I stand there," she said, "and pour water over me from one of those brass pots you see in the corner."

"Do you never go to the public baths?" I said.

"No; ladies of the better class rarely go; we prefer the privacy of our own homes."[1]

"But," I persisted, "I have heard that you have very beautiful baths with marble floors." Here

[1] The custom of resorting to public baths was introduced from Bokhara by the rich Jews who emigrated to Russian territory.

all my listeners began to laugh and shake their heads.

"There are no baths in Tashkent with marble floors," they said.

This, as I found afterwards, was quite correct; there is no marble in the neighbourhood of Tashkent. The provinces that rejoice in such luxuries are those of Bokhara and Samarkand. As for Fergana, it is only just beginning to build baths for its women, and these, they say, will not be provided with marble floors.

In describing the dress and personal appearance of Sart women, I should give an erroneous impression were I to speak of any one habit or custom as if it were a hard and fast rule. There is as much variety in their indoor dress as in our own. For instance, though I never saw an old woman with her head uncovered, there was an endless variety in the ways of wearing the headdress, and also in its quality. Some women wrap their heads in a kind of coarse linen, while others use muslin. I remember the headdress of one of the elder ladies of the Cushbeggi's household at Bokhara. It was of the finest transparent muslin, which had come, probably, like the Cushbeggi's turban, from Manchester, which town has the honour of supplying many turbans to Bokharan royalty. Long ends hung down at the back of the neck, and were brought round over the shoulders like a shawl, softening the brilliant

colours of the silken robes beneath, and reminding one of the almost transparent *haik* worn by the upper classes in Morocco.

Oftener than not I found unmarried girls wearing no head-covering in the house. Their straight, black hair was parted in the middle, and hung in numerous plaits upon their shoulders. At first I was astonished at the length of these plaits, but on examining them I found that, a little below the waist, they merged into false ones of black silk, each of which terminated at the ankle in a tassel of coloured glass beads. One girl graciously allowed me to count her plaits. I took each of them in my fingers and examined it carefully—there was no wig in the question—she had fifty-five long plaits, and all her own hair. When I spoke of this to a Russian merchant who had resided for some years in Samarkand, he replied: "Yes, that is all very well, but if you had examined them more closely, you would have discovered that all the women wear wigs." It is just the same in England; when your hair curls naturally strangers say: "What a lot of time that woman must waste before her glass." I may add that the girl in her turn asked me to let her rub my eyebrows with her white sleeve, that she might test the quality of the black paint she supposed I had used. "Why, it doesn't come off!" she exclaimed in surprise.

To return to the subject of wigs, Vambéry, to

whom I submitted my notes in 1896, wrote to me as follows: "The wearing of them is strictly prohibited by the Mohammedan religion, which is more strictly observed in Bokhara than anywhere else in Islam." Sart women spare no pains to make their hair grow thick and long. I found it always thick, but coarse. Nalivkin tells us that a woman wears several plaits till her first child is born, and goes by the name of *Bushkakul*, or "five plaits." Afterwards she wears only two. There is a belief that unless the ends of the plaits are tied up in cotton-wool the hair will all come out in summer time. The hair is not brushed every morning; a Sart woman merely puts her hand through her hair on rising. If there happens to be a Koran in the room she covers her head the first thing out of respect to its holy presence. She washes her hair once a week, every Thursday, and it is only then that she brushes it. To wash the head on a Tuesday, or on a market-day, is considered very unlucky. When a woman has undone her plaits she washes her head in *katik* or boiled sour milk, and combs it while wet, but never at any other time, lest she might pull out a hair. Rich and poor alike, all use *katik*, but there is this difference, the rich wash the milk out again with warm water, while the poor leave it in, and consequently carry about with them a sour odour that is not exactly agreeable. Many Russian ladies, admiring the splendid hair of their Sart neighbours,

have adopted the sour-milk process. I do not know the result. Sart women never cut their hair. The fact that it thrives so well without, inclines me to suspect that the time-honoured idea in Europe that periodical clippings are a necessity may have originated in the mind of some ingenious hairdresser. Young girls arrange their plaits with coquettish care; two are generally drawn over the ears so as to hang down upon the breast, and two very fine plaits start close on either side of the central parting, and fall over the sides of the forehead.

Her pearly little teeth are one of the pleasing points in a Sart girl. I do not think I met one who had not pretty and regular teeth.

"How is it you all have such beautiful teeth?" I asked in every town I came to; but the only explanation I received was that they ate much less meat than Europeans. No tooth-powder is ever used. The Sart simply dips his or her first finger into water after every meal, and rubs the teeth with it. Schwarz says that the women chew mastics, such as *Pistachio lenticus*, to improve their teeth, but this cannot be a widespread practice, or I should certainly have heard of it from the Sart women.

I was informed that before a woman is twenty-five she begins to lose her teeth; and that it is to make the gaps less prominent that the lower classes resort to a ghastly custom of painting all that remain

with a black substance called *ackli*, one application of which suffices to keep the teeth black for a year. I met with a similar custom in northern Japan. Nalivkin says that in Fergana even quite young women paint their teeth black. I saw it only among old women. To blacken their eyelashes they employ an herb called *usma;* Russian ladies also use it.

"Joining eyebrows are considered a beauty in all Mohammedan lands," says Vambéry, and I was told by the ladies of Tashkent that it was the custom there for every woman to dye her eyebrows in summer with the juice of a particular plant that grows in the gardens. When the juice is fresh it dyes a dark green, but they do not mind that, as it is considered to impart brightness to the eyes, besides making the brows thicker. A Sart in Namangan told me he brought special paint for the eyebrows of his four wives all the way from Mecca. I have seen some ladies, especially in Bokhara and Samarkand, with a thick black line drawn over the eyebrows and extending from ear to ear. The dye used for this purpose is prepared from peach-stones.

Nearly all the young women I saw in Tashkent had bright healthy complexions, which needed nothing in the way of paint or powder; and when I asked them if they used any, they were often greatly amused. One lady in Tashkent answered quite indignantly in the negative, and assured me that her

husband would be very angry indeed if she ever did such a thing.

"Pretty women never paint," she said, "only the ugly ones."

The best complexions were in Fergana, where painting the face, except on the marriage-day, is a thing unheard of in respectable families. Life there is in general much simpler, less ostentatious than in Samarkand or Bokhara, where a great deal of paint and powder are used. The painting of the finger-nails and the palms of the hands with henna is a custom that one meets with in all Sart towns; but I found it almost entirely confined to the middle and lower classes. The wife of an influential Sart in Tashkent told me that she only used henna to cool her feet when they ached in hot weather. Many use balsam juice instead of henna; they stain the soles of their feet by wrapping them at night in bandages soaked in henna, a practice that is equally in vogue amongst Moorish women. On her marriage-day a Sart girl is expected, however, to have an artificial flush upon her cheeks, and her friends would not consider her a proper bride were she to omit the daubs of brilliant cochineal that make her so hideous. To satisfy the Sart ideas of beauty a girl must be fat and plump, but I never heard of her being dieted to that end as is the case in Morocco. Sart women have small, well-shaped hands, but rather large feet, which defect, however,

is of little importance, as everybody wears the same sized jack-boots. As the boots are always at least a size larger than the feet, no one is ever troubled with corns.

On my first journey across the Caspian my brother introduced me to a young Russian officer who had spent his childhood in Tashkent, and in the course of our conversation I asked him what the Sart women were like. Placing his finger on his nose, he did his best to flatten that poor feature, while he blew out his cheeks to the utmost.

"They are uglier than that!" he said.

I was compelled to own when I saw them that there was some truth in this description; for many of their faces were decidedly broad, and their noses, which were very wide at the base, appeared flat on account of their width of cheek-bone. At the same time the chin was pointed, and the general contour was almost pear-shaped, while their ears were large, and inclined to stick out. I was the more surprised because I had seen nothing in the men's faces to prepare me for so pronounced a type in the women. This type is a result of the mixture of Uzbegs and Tajiks. It is a curious blend between the Mongol and the Persian. I was almost startled to come across one very much like it in the museum at Khabarovsk in Siberia, and to find it labelled *Japanese*. The race to which the Mongol face belongs has spread over a goodly portion of the earth



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SART WOMEN OF THE MIDDLE CLASS
(Dancing-girls)

p. 127

in its day, and to trace its history is fascinating work. I grew rather to like this Sart type in time—the fresh complexion, the shining Mongol eyes, and the long Persian lashes curling upwards.

In a country with so varied a history as that of Turkestan, one naturally meets with many types of women, but I have confined myself for the present to a description of the people called Sarts, and there is only one other type to be described under that head; the Tajik type—met with chiefly in Bokhara and Samarkand, a product of an unceasing influx of foreign blood, Aral, Persian, Turkoman, and all the nationalities that have swept over the land since our forefathers left it, Uzbegs only excepted. The Tajik woman's face is small and oval, and, though very Persian-looking, is yet quite distinct. Some of her ancestors must have been pure Persian, for every man who could afford it used to buy himself a Persian slave wife from the Turkoman brigands, till Russia put a stop to slavery. The present Amir of Bokhara, though an Uzbeg, inherits his good looks from a Persian slave-mother. The women of Samarkand are mostly of Bokharan descent, and vary but slightly from those of that Khanate, whose clear, olive complexions, though attractive in their way, and greatly admired by some people, are a contrast to those of the fair and ruddy Uzbeg women of Tashkent, Namangan, and Fergana. The chief difference between a Tajik and a Persian face, in my

opinion, is the sad lack of individuality in the former. A boy's face hardly differs from that of a girl till he is in his teens. Small mouths, regular features, pretty, girlish noses, and almost consumptive-looking faces met us everywhere in the streets of Bokhara. I speak now of the men; but it is much the same with the women. A Russian resident to whom I remarked upon the sickly look of the Bokharans told me that he attributed it to two causes: their unhealthy, cramped-up houses, together with a lack of exercise and fresh air, and the immorality of their private life.

Although it is impossible to distinguish, behind her horsehair veil, the pretty woman from the ugly one, or the old from the young, "the man in the street" can generally tell at a glance whether she is rich or poor, for the quality and condition of her *parandja*, or outer garment, are sure indications of her social position. If she is poor the *parandja* is often ragged and dirty, or carefully patched, according to the wearer's idleness or thrift. The veils, too, are sometimes in a state of great dilapidation. I heard of cases where women, being too poor to renew their street attire, have done without for years by borrowing that of a neighbour whenever necessity compelled them to leave their homes. There have also been cases where spirited young ladies, wishing to walk abroad without running the risk of being recognised and sent home by jealous husbands, have

donned the shabby garb of a poorer neighbour for greater security. The *parandjas* of the rich women are often of silk, the material most used is cotton; but no colour except the regulation one of dull grey is ever worn out of doors by Sart women. In the bazaar at Namangan I once caught sight of a *parandja* of canary yellow; and in another town a figure in bright red crossed my path. On making inquiries about these phenomena I was informed by my native friends that the wearers were Tatár women. It is possible to stroll about the streets of Bokhara for days together without meeting a woman; then, turning a corner, you may suddenly come, as I once did, upon an unveiled female beggar, seated in the very middle of the narrow street, as though she were determined to be trodden upon. She is, of course, a woman who has no character to lose. One evening when I was returning to our caravanserai just after dark, I met several women walking along with their veils thrown back over their foreheads.

"They are permitted to do that," explained my companion, "when it is too dark for their features to be distinguished."

I once asked a Sart if young girls did not find the heavy veil very irksome when they first began to wear it, to which he replied that that depended much on the character of the individual.

"If a girl is inclined to be a coquette," he added, "or wishes to be thought grown-up, she is so anxious

to wear the veil that she sometimes begins too soon; but if she is childish and simple she puts off the evil day as long as possible."

The horsehair veiling is manufactured in great quantities in Bokhara. It is woven in pieces of so many yards, and cut up afterwards to the desired length. The price varies according to the quality, from one to four shillings a yard. Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo mentions this veiling in a description of his journey to the court of Tamerlane, A.D. 1403.[1]

The strangest thing about the *parandja*, or outer garment, is its long, tapering sleeves, which, too narrow for use, are thrown back over the shoulders and pinned together behind. This useless fashion arose in the following way. It was found that, as women never put their arms through the sleeves of this garment, their shape and length was of no consequence, and that by being made long and tapering they could be pinned out of the way more easily. A woman's boots, always very visible, are exactly like those worn by the men, a kind of Wellington, made of native leather, reaching to the knee. As in Turkey, the ladies all wear trousers, and over these the indoor boots are drawn; stockings are unknown. The sole of the boot is soft, and there are no heels. A huge golosh, turning up at the toe, is bought with the boot for outdoor wear, and fits over it. Just as

[1] This fascinating book of travel was translated into English for the Hakluyt Society in 1859, by Sir Clements Markham.



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A SART LADY AND CHILD

This lady, having seen the author pass with her camera (through a hole in the door), sent her little daughter out to inquire how much it would cost to be photographed.

the Japs slip their feet out of their footgear before entering a house, so the Sarts slip theirs out of their goloshes. There is a special boot for riding, worn by men and women alike; its long heel tapers off to the size of a lady's thimble. I never saw any one try to walk in such boots, but have heard that they are of great assistance in wading through the Tashkent mud.

The indoor dress of Sart women varies in different provinces. In Tashkent and in Namangan I found some ladies wearing short silk tunics over silken robes, the last like those worn by the men; others wore loose jackets with sleeves cut after the fashion of those wide ones which were worn by our grandmothers in the early part of last century. In Bokhara no short over-garment is worn, but the robe is much wider and shorter, and shows a great deal more of the high indoor boots, which are specially elaborate in consequence. A Bokharan gentleman, who had been in Europe, explained this difference to me by saying that as far as the fashion of the women's dress was concerned, Bokhara was the Paris, and Samarkand the Moscow of Central Asia. The ladies of Bokhara wear a stiff band of one-coloured silk over the forehead called a *peeshanaban*, which I did not meet with anywhere else. The usual head-covering is a silk handkerchief tied over an embroidered cap such as the boys wear. Many Bokharan ladies

wear, in addition to the *peeshanaban*, a silk handkerchief round the chin just as if they were suffering from mumps. The cotton tunic and trousers worn under the silken robe are slept in at night, the outer garment only being removed. Having heard repeatedly that the Sarts never changed their under-garments till they fell from them in rags, I asked a native lady if this was true.

"That may be the case with the lower classes," she replied indignantly, "but all respectable people have their clothes washed every two or three weeks. The Koran forbids our changing them oftener; we must not be too luxurious in our habits."

In these days the higher-class ladies of Bokhara wear jewellery brought direct from Paris, but a great many native ornaments are mixed up with it. A Sart woman who has any pretensions to dress wears at least a dozen strings of coral round her neck. The coral is imported from China by way of Kashgar. Heavy silver earrings are much in vogue, and also amulets decorated with turquoises and coral or glass beads; both are hooked into the hair above the ears. A lady in Andijan who was really very pretty, and the apple of her husband's eye, told me that the amulet she wore upon her heart contained an Arabic prayer for her health, which had been written on purpose by the chief *kazi* or judge of the town. Her husband had paid five roubles (ten shillings) for it. Rings are

much worn, but I saw few on the ladies' fingers superior to those bought by children in England at two a penny. In the bazaar at Tashkent a man was making pretty silver rings with three hoops which fitted into one, on the finger, not unlike those we get from Ceylon. At his side was a pail of nose-rings, and a little Jewish girl, who had just bought one, stood by it, apparently waiting to see if we would follow her example. She had fitted hers on to her left nostril as we might fit a *pince-nez* on to the bridge of our nose. After a second visit to the country I can repeat with truth what I said in my paper on the women of Bokhara, read at University College, London, 1897, that I have never seen a Sart woman with a hole bored in her nostril; and, what is more, I believe that most, if not all, the nose-rings I saw in that pail were destined for the adornment of Jewish damsels. Thinking I should have plenty of other opportunities, I did not buy one, an omission I now regret, for, as it happened, I never again saw any for sale. Bracelets, consisting of solid bands of pure silver, were to be seen in the houses of the rich, but I saw none that would tempt me to buy. Some of the necklaces were rather quaint; they were like rows of silver fishes strung together with a glass bead or two between each fish. Some writers illustrate their descriptions of Sart jewellery with photographs of ladies covered with massive silver

breastplates, and rings studded with agates as large as the top of a man's thumb; but such jewellery being made for, and worn only by, Turkoman women, these photographs are somewhat misleading. There is, of course, the excuse that no male photographer has ever had an opportunity of photographing *a respectable* Sart woman. When entertained by the chief Sart of Namangan I was anxious to photograph his four pretty wives in a group, and urged as an inducement that the picture would appear in a book presented to the Empress of Russia.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," replied my host with dignity, "than that the White Empress should look upon a photograph of myself and my sons, but my wives must ever remain in the privacy of their home."

On almost every occasion when I succeeded in obtaining permission to photograph the women, their husbands only allowed it with the understanding that the pictures should not appear anywhere except in my book. Happily for me, it never seemed to enter their heads that a copy might some day reach Central Asia. Possibly they thought that their wives would have ceased to be young and pretty before such a thing could happen.

A lady, who had resided for many years in Morocco, was looking over the photographs I had brought from Turkestan, when she suddenly

exclaimed, "Why, all the people have got boots on!" She had hit upon one of the chief differences in the dress of the two countries. The high boots worn by Sart women indoors and out are a characteristic feature of their attire. Professor Vambéry, on reading over my notes, wrote at the side: "These boots are really leathern stockings over which the shoes for outdoor wear are drawn. The former are callen *mez*, the latter *kafsh*." Burnes, who visited Bokhara in 1834, wrote of the women: "What a strange taste for those who are forever concealed to choose to be thus booted, as if prepared for a journey!"

Dark green is a favourite colour for these boots. The price of a good pair is from four to ten shillings, according to the amount of coloured leather that has been let in as ornament; cheap ones have only one little piece of coloured leather let in at the heel. The most expensive, which are covered all over with brilliant designs, are not of native manufacture; they are of Tatár make, and come in great quantities from Kazan. I remember once spending an afternoon at the house of a rich Tatár there, who had made his fortune by supplying boots to Bokhara, where, as I have already said, the shortest dresses and the most elaborate boots are worn. Native boots are made of horse and donkey leather. Schwarz says that the green colour is obtained by the use of vitriol, and that in

order to make the leather elastic it is soaked for several days in water and then strewn with millet; the millet is hammered into it, and the whole is left to dry. Afterwards, when the millet has been brushed away, it is dyed, and the indentations caused by the seed swell out, thus giving the leather its peculiar mottled appearance.

CHAPTER XIII

MARRIAGE

THE schoolmistress in Kokand told me that it was a rare thing if a girl remained in her school after she had reached her twelfth year, as most scholars left to be married before that age, some even at nine. The husbands are much older. A boy is never married before he is sixteen. When a family is very poor, the daughter's marriage is frequently hurried on, that the parents may get money from the bridegroom. Nalivkin tells of a destitute sweet-seller who could not make more than twopence-halfpenny a day, and was at last compelled to sell his only daughter for eight shillings. Some girls are quite anxious to be married. One damsel was so glad when her wedding-day arrived that, instead of crying, as she ought to have done on leaving the parental roof, she literally jumped for joy. Her mother was obliged to beat her at last, just to make the tears come. There are practically no old maids among the Sarts. In our country some men hold back from marriage because they fear to run the risk of getting an unsuitable wife. No Sart ever has that fear, because he can change her for

another whenever he likes without the least difficulty. Then, too, the Mohammedan law commands all men to marry. Women, on the other hand, are anxious for the protection that a husband's name will give. There is no marriage ceremony except the drawing up of a settlement, when a mullah is called in, it is true, but merely that he may serve as a witness.

Sometimes there is so much disputing as to the *calim*, or price, that is to be paid to the bride that all the neighbours round have to be called in to settle it. Part of the *calim* is paid on the day of the betrothal, but the bride is not supposed to go to her husband's home till the whole has been paid. Between the betrothal and a wedding delayed on account of the dowry the husband may visit his wife, but the parents must not see him come, or go, or meet him anywhere, till the wedding-day. Strange scenes are often the result of this extraordinary custom. For instance, the bridegroom is buying something in the bazaar, when the people standing near all begin to laugh ; he looks round to see what is the cause of their merriment, and meets the eye of his father-in-law. The next moment he has bolted from the spot like a frightened hare. With the Turkomans this custom holds good even longer. A man must not see his wife's father until the first child is born. A Russian officer in Merv told me that a Turkoman who had come to his office

to speak to him on a matter of business suddenly leaped on to a chair, broke the iron bar across the office window, and made his escape by it, and only because his father-in-law had entered the room. Strange that in England—it is his mother-in-law of whom a man usually stands in awe!

Although it is written in the Mohammedan law that a man may only have four wives, I was constantly told by the Sarts themselves that a rich mullah might have, and generally had, five. Other people have to be content with four, but that matters little, seeing that they can change as often as they like. A woman may only have one husband at a time,[1] but it is immaterial how often she changes him. A man's first wife keeps house, and the other three must obey her, and address her as "elder sister." If she dies, the favourite wife takes her place, not the next in order. If a wife's relations do not want her to go to another town with her husband, he leaves her with them and finds another wife to replace her in the other town. If a man has his property scattered about in several places, he marries a wife in each, so that each of his estates may have a mistress to manage it. The scolding and squabbling that goes on when all the wives are in one house is something terrible. Yet a first wife occasionally begs her husband to take a second that

[1] Polyandry does exist in some parts of Central Asia, but not in Turkestan.

she may be relieved of the housework. We were greatly touched by the words of an old lady in Samarkand, who said to us: "Every first wife prays God that her husband may never become rich, so that she may be his only wife always. We are happy if there is just enough money to buy food and drink. If there is a little over there comes a new wife, and our happiness is gone." Then she went on to tell us how a woman in the next house had, quite recently, tried to poison her husband by pouring mercury into his ear, but his life was saved and the matter hushed up. Before the Russians came women used frequently, out of jealousy, to poison their husbands with aconite, which grows wild in the country round; but now, afraid of being punished for murder, they content themselves with calling in the aid of sorcerers, and carrying prayers in their amulets with such words as "Love me best" written in Arabic. If a bride is poor, her people spend the *calim* in buying her a trousseau, but if she is rich they return a double *calim* to the bridegroom, a piece of silk or porcelain, or some such present, stating at the same time the exact worth of each gift. When a man wants a wife he employs some elderly female relative to find out where there is a suitable lady; and then, though he is not supposed to see his future wife before the betrothal, he sometimes bribes the aged match-maker to let him get a peep at his intended through

some hole in a door or curtain. If she happens to be a cousin or some other near relative, he has probably known her well as a child. The *calim* is a large or small sum of money, or a tray of presents, proportionate to her *reported* looks and general condition. I was informed that a girl marked with smallpox could be had very cheaply, also a girl who was slightly lame. A Russian lady whose manservant was about to be married said to him—

"Suppose you don't like the looks of your wife when you see her?"

"If I don't like her," he replied with vehemence, "I shall kill my mother."

The wedding is celebrated by several days of feasting in the house of the bride, when she is surrounded by all her lady friends and their children. I was present at a Tashkent wedding, and cannot easily forget the deafening shouts of the young people.

"They are asking you to photograph the bride," said my interpreter.

"Bring her out into the light," I answered, "and we will see what we can do."

"Oh no, oh no; she cannot come out for at least a week," replied her friends; "you must go inside and photograph her in her state apartment." I went in and shook hands with her, but as there were no windows, and her face was but dimly visible, taking her photograph was out of the question. I have visited a goodly number of Sart brides, and

invariably found them in a fainting attitude, as though they were anxious to swoon away. Nothing would induce them to lift their eyes from the ground, and whenever it was possible they would bury their faces in the robe of some lady relative during the whole of our interview. Outside in the courtyard there would be a row of female musicians seated on mattresses, and dancing-girls performed to the tambourine music. The girls wore red cloths tied over their foreheads, strings of coral round their necks, and purple velvet tunics over robes with sleeves half a yard longer than their arms, which flapped about like fins. Round and round they twirled, the centre of an admiring crowd, singing as they danced, and presently the little boys, without waiting for a pause, threw them coins, which they dexterously caught in their mouths. All this time the bride sat alone in her inner chamber, never attempting to join in the fun. Sart women of good character never dance in public; they consider it undignified. The schoolmistress at Samarkand took us into the room where her son's bride was just concluding her week of enforced seclusion. Her trousseau was hung upon lines at one end of the room. She had an embroidered handkerchief, especially worked in three corners, so that she might hold it in her right hand and effectively cover her face with it when visitors were announced. Behind the cord hung with her trousseau was a handsome velvet cloth,

about twelve feet square, with pictures of Mecca embroidered all over it, which had been in the family for several generations, and was only used on state occasions. This divided her sleeping apartment from the one in which she spent the day. The bride was wearing a thimble on her third finger, but it was against the law for her to touch any work, even embroidery, till the seven days were over. Perhaps she had found idleness unbearable, and was amusing herself on the sly when we interrupted her. Seeing the father-in-law waiting about in the courtyard, I asked why he did not come in.

"He must wait until the seven days are over," said the old lady, "then he will pay the bride a visit."

"What is your husband's name?" I asked the bride.

"I have not the right to pronounce the name of my husband," she answered.

Many divorces occur because a man thinks his wife ugly, or because his lady relatives have spoken to him about some prettier girl. A wife can seldom get a divorce without the consent of her husband. A rich girl, if she does not like her husband, goes back to her own people, but she is still his wife. A poor girl cannot go home, she remains in the home —a servant to the new wife very often. If the husband has consented to her divorce she may

marry again. A widow may marry again two months and ten days after the death of her husband. A divorced woman's position in society is as good as that of an unmarried girl, and better, because she has more liberty. The frequent divorces are a source of gain to the mullahs, who receive presents in return for their services. The cases in which a woman can compel her husband to divorce her are: when she can prove that he has beaten her black and blue without cause; when he marries a second wife without her formal permission; when he has given her nothing to eat for six months; when he has taken her to live in a place three days' journey from her own home without her consent; when he loses his reason; or when he is a leper.

Divorce begins by one or the other saying *Talek*. Then they must think it over for three days. If both are still anxious for a divorce, they then say before witnesses that they want it. If a husband wishes to get rid of his wife without good reason, he must return to her all that she brought with her of value, but she does not return him his *calim*. When the word *Talek* has been said three times they cannot go back. After that, should the wife wish to return to her husband, she must first marry another man, and get a divorce from him, before she can do so. Then there has to be a new wedding, as if she had never been married before. After she

has been divorced a wife may keep her children till they are seven years of age, then the husband must support them. Women often marry again after they have reached the age of forty, or even forty-five.[1]

Out in the villages there are very few women who can read; perhaps two in each village, but not more. Nalivkin, who lived among the Sarts as one of themselves, relates that the country people have signs and symbols for expressing what they want to say to friends at a distance. If a woman sends her husband a piece of coal, for instance, he interprets the message as, "I am black as a coal with sorrow at your absence." If the emblem sent is a straw, the meaning is, "I am yellow with regret," &c. If it is a blue thread it is, "There has been a death in our family."

Another strange custom is that if three generations of a family live together, as is nearly always the case, the children are taught to call their grandparents father and mother, and their own parents elder brother and elder sister respectively. This seems to indicate a reverence for the aged, which is more than contradicted by actions that speak louder than words.

There is little companionship between a Sart husband and wife unless they work at the same

[1] A widow may marry again four months and ten days after the death of her first husband.

trade, seeing that the man spends every free moment in the bazaar.

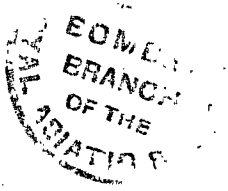
Some women are very thrifty; they work hard while their lazy husbands hang about doing nothing. There have been cases where a wife has supported the whole family by selling her embroidery and hatching silkworms' eggs. With regard to the latter employment, it was, till quite lately, entirely in the hands of the women.



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A SART BUTCHER'S SHOP IN FERGANA

(Showing fat-tailed sheep)



CHAPTER XIV

SART COOKING

THERE is no such thing as a kitchen in a Sart household, and the cooking utensils are so few that they can stand in the corner of the living-room without inconvenience to its occupants. In the same corner, a pole stretched across from wall to wall, about six feet from the ground, serves, as I have said before, as the family larder, and from it are suspended a number of ragged-looking pieces of meat, which, to our ideas, are anything but a tempting sight. Large joints of meat are unknown among the Sarts; it is sold in the bazaar in fragments of never more than two pounds, and looks as if it had been torn from the carcase without the aid of a knife. Finding the primitive larder rather full in one house, I inquired of our hostess how long she could keep her meat hanging there, to which she replied that the particular supply at which I was looking had been carefully salted, and, as the weather was cold, it would hang there safely for several weeks. In hot weather it is not pleasant to pass a butcher's shop, for, take what care they will, the natives cannot keep all their meat in good

condition until it is sold, besides which, flies settle on it in myriads, till sight and smell drive the traveller from the spot. The poor seldom indulge in meat, and the rich are content to have it only once a day in their national dish—*pilau*. The meat that finds most favour is mutton. Central Asian sheep are particularly fine, and we thought their meat the only kind worth eating. These animals are kept in great flocks by the Kirgiz,[1] who supply them to the Sart markets. They are a large breed, with long legs, flapping ears, and curved noses. Some of them weigh as much as a hundred and fifty pounds. Travellers describe them as fat-tailed sheep, but it would be more correct to say that they have no tails at all. The lump of fat, which the Sarts find so useful in their cooking, is really part of the back, which hangs over the hind legs and swings with every movement of the body. It disappears altogether when the sheep are insufficiently fed. The Sarts don't understand sheep without these "tails." I heard of one who, when he saw some hanging in a butcher's shop in Europe, exclaimed in a tone of horror—

"Why, these are dogs!"

To the Moslem the dog is an unclean animal.

When skinned and hung up in the bazaar the back of the carcase has the appearance of merging into two great bags of suet; it is not suet, however,

[1] See Chap. XXIII.

but ordinary mutton fat, and its taste does not differ from that of the mutton fat of Europe, from which I have been told we manufacture, amongst other things, a delicacy known as chocolate cream. By the Sarts it is also used in confectionery, a fact of which no one who has tasted a native sweetmeat can remain in doubt.

As I have never seen a young Sart woman employed in cooking, I once more draw my inspiration from a grandmamma, and describe how I saw her prepare the family *pilau*. She was the oldest member of the family of a wealthy Sart in Chyust, and on the occasion of my visit I found her standing over a great copper stewpan in the courtyard, stirring its contents with a long wooden spoon. It was a bright but cold and frosty December day, and I for my part should have preferred seeing the operation carried on indoors, for I felt my toes freeze on the hard ground. The stewpan was on a charcoal fire in a clay fireplace, about two feet above the ground, that had evidently been built for the purpose. I looked into the pot and saw what I at first took to be a quantity of boiling oil; it was almost as clear as water.

"That is mutton fat," said my guide. "This old lady is making *pilau;* you see how well she has melted down the fat and removed every atom of scum. You can hardly tell it from water."

There were at least six quarts of fat in that

stewpan, and I remarked upon the expense it must be to prepare such a dish if all that oil was required.

"Oh! she will use that again and again," was the reply. "If it is well cleared after the *pilau* is taken out it will last a long time."

The next step was to drop into the pan little bits of mutton about half an inch square; then a quantity of carrots cut into fine strips was added: it would have taken a long time to prepare this vegetable at home, but it is bought already sliced in the bazaar, where great piles of it form one of the brightest bits of colouring in a greengrocer's booth. After awhile the rice is added, and a cover put on to keep in the steam, which cooks it. The old lady was prepared to do the thing thoroughly, but I felt too cold to stand there any longer, so she explained to me, through my interpreter, that there was nothing more to be done but to stir the rice at intervals and add dried raisins and various condiments to give it a pleasant flavour. The best dish of *pilau* I ever tasted was served up straight from the pot at the house of a Kokand merchant. Every grain of rice was separate, and a more savoury dish I could never wish for; it had no taste of the oil. In some houses it had cooled slightly before it was handed to us, and then we could hardly eat it for the strong taste of mutton fat.

It must not be inferred from what I have said

above that only the old women know how to cook, for every Sart can make a *pilau*. It is served up in a large dish, and the family sit round it eating with their fingers, which, needless to say, are soon in a very oily condition; however, the hands and lips are washed before and after every meal. A brass basin being brought to each one in turn, water is poured over the hands by an attendant. In rich families the men eat in their own apartment, waited on by the women, but in quiet households they often eat with their wives. There is a saying in Fergana that if a woman eats with uncovered head her good angel leaves her. When a meal is over the oldest man present makes a sign to the others, and then all wipe their beards with both hands.

Another thing the Sart can make to perfection is the *pelmene*, as the Russians call it (I forget the native name), a kind of meat turnover. The orthodox way of making these is to put them into a covered sieve and steam them over boiling water, but I came across a booth in Bokhara where one Sart was filling these patties with chopped meat and onions, while another at his side threw them into a pan of boiling fat as soon as they were ready. After letting them frizzle for a few minutes he fished them out with a ladle and browned them before a brisk charcoal fire. They were bought and eaten by the passers-by as fast

as they could be made, and at last, having watched the whole process, we tried them too, and found them very good indeed. At one dinner-party a dish of stewed apples mashed in mutton fat was handed round. A single mouthful was all I could manage of this concoction, at which our host looked quite perplexed—he thought it so very nice.

The Sarts make neither butter nor cheese; they drink their milk fresh, or cook rice in it. Cows do not thrive in Central Asia; there is no proper pasturage for them. You occasionally see a boy leading a lean, wretched-looking cow by a string, and letting it stop from time to time to snatch a blade of grass upon the roadside. This is all the "leading to pasture" the poor creatures get, so neither their beef nor their butter can ever amount to much.

The Sarts excel in making fruit syrups, and often put these into their tea instead of sugar. In hot weather fruit ices are made with syrup, and sold in the bazaar. The man in the refreshment booth has a block of ice at hand, and as a passer-by stops to buy some he scrapes the block with a sharp knife over a saucer, and, when this is sufficiently full of the frozen shavings, pours a spoonful of grape or some other syrup over it and the ice is ready. The quality of the ice depends entirely upon the cleanliness of the particular canal from which it has been taken, and it is therefore more doubtful in Bokhara

than elsewhere; nevertheless that is just where the most ice is eaten. During Ramazan the people break their long fast at sunset by eating *neeshaldah*, a preparation of white of egg that looks like whipped cream. Though I saw it at every street corner for a month, I never could bring myself to taste this mixture. At sunset every man and boy we met seemed to be carrying a basin of *neeshaldah*. Sometimes we met one carrying a pole with four basins swinging from it; this seemed to me rather a sensible method of carrying liquid, as it jerked less with the movement of the body than if carried on a tray.

The Sarts have a great reverence for bread, because it is the staff of life. "You must never turn a piece of bread on its back," they say. The amount of bread a man can pile up before his visitor is considered a token of his wealth. At the close of Ramazan many families put away a piece of bread to be kept till the next fast. In one house they showed me a piece that had been kept for seven years. Sometimes flat loaves are hung on nails round the walls and kept in that way. Curiously enough, the keeping of bread from Easter to Easter was once a custom in England. An old lady of my mother's acquaintance used to treasure under a glass shade an Easter loaf that had been handed down to her by her ancestors. There are hens in nearly every courtyard, and eggs are plentiful, but very small, and rarely to be had quite fresh. The Sarts

boil them hard, and sell them in the bazaar coloured blue and red. Schwarz believes that the Indo-Germanic races brought the custom of Easter eggs from Turkestan, especially as the Chinese, who also look upon Central Asia as the cradle of their nation, have preserved, up to this day, a similar custom.

The *omelette aux fines herbes* is much appreciated by the lower classes, for whom it is prepared in a round pan a foot and a half in diameter and then cut up into slices. It was amusing to watch the hungry customers crowding round an omelette-seller, and swallowing his wares with evident relish at two slices a farthing. There is a kind of cake made after Ramazan, which is composed chiefly of flour, honey, and pistachio-nuts. It is not a cake peculiar to the Sarts, however, as the Tatárs also have it; they too think it a great delicacy, but, to my taste, partaking of it seemed too much like filling the mouth with flour.

The Sarts, like other Asiatics, have an almost childish love for sweetmeats, some of which, in spite of the external mutton fat, are really prepared with great skill. Their imitations of various fruits and nuts are sometimes quite deceptive. I remember a warm discussion that arose between my two interpreters on one occasion as to whether a dish of blanched almonds that a Sart had set before us consisted of real almonds or of an exceedingly close imitation of them. I put one into my mouth and proved it to be a sweetmeat.

CHAPTER XV

NATIVE BATHS

HAVING obtained permission from the proprietor of the largest bath in Samarkand, we went to see it on the women's day, and were so fascinated by the surroundings in which we found ourselves that we remained there for the rest of the morning. The wife of the proprietor, who was gorgeous with silk and jewels, received us with gracious smiles, and found us seats. She looked about the age of thirty-five, and, even at that advanced age, could still be called a pretty woman. Her husband, she told us, allowed her the use of the bath one day a week, and all that she could make out of the women bathers was her own private pocket-money. Each bather pays from half a farthing to twopence, according to her means. The half-farthing bather pays for two baths together, as there is no coin of that value. The proprietress does not pay the bathing attendants anything; they come of their own accord, and earn what they can from the bathers in return for scrubbing them and pouring vessels of water over them.

Oh what a scene that was! and what a Babel! The only light came from an aperture in the roof,

about two feet square, and our eyes had to get accustomed to the dimness before we could distinguish anything but a writhing mass of women and children employed in putting on and taking off their clothes. The bath itself was below the ground floor, and the steps down to it, in the centre of the dressing apartment, seemed to lead into a dark vault, for there was very little light inside. Up and down these steps there passed incessantly a naked crowd. Mothers carrying their babies, and looking half savage, like North American Indians with their long, straight hair hanging lank upon their bare shoulders, would emerge with steaming skin, and begin to put on their clothes in front of us. Little children, carrying smaller ones on their backs, toiled with hands and feet up the steps that were too high for their tiny legs. One child, who could not have been more than five, arrived at the bath quite alone, carrying her baby brother on her back. She undressed the baby and herself and, taking the little thing again on her back, crawled down the steps and was lost to sight among the other bathers; so tiny was that little couple that I could have carried the two of them easily in my arms. Gathering my skirts together, I followed them down the wet and slippery steps and entered the bath. Here was a scene! The slanting marble floor, heated from beneath, was not easy to stand upon, and the walls rang with the screams of children falling about

and clinging to their mothers in fear. The mothers' voices, scolding loudly, added to the deafening uproar. A low doorway led into a hotter and still darker room, where the floor, having been still more heated from below, was too hot to stand on, and the scene even more exciting in consequence. The old bathing-women, with nothing but a towel round their shrivelled-up forms, were dashing water over their victims, while here and there some bather with a frugal mind was pouring water over herself from a copper vessel with a spout. The horrible noise was as trying as the hot air, and I was soon glad to go back to the dressing-chamber. I sat down and looked round me. On my left an interesting scene was being enacted. Seated tailor fashion upon the floor was an old woman with three saucers on her lap containing mixtures red, white, and black respectively; squatted down in front of her was one of the bathers, dressed now, and apparently clothed in her right mind. The old woman was trimming up her eyebrows previous to blacking them. With a little knife she dexterously pulled out a hair here and a hair there till the brows were correctly arched. The operation must have been rather unpleasant, but her client never flinched. Others, who had gone through the beautifying process, were regarding themselves carefully in little Russian looking-glasses that hung round the walls.

"You see," said my interpreter, "each woman

paints and powders before the glass till she thinks she resembles an angel, then she is happy."

While the artist was busy in her corner, other women were doing a brisk trade in powdered native soap, also heaped in saucers. It was of a dirty green colour and looked far from inviting, yet the bathers readily exchanged small coins for a pinch of it on their way down. They only used it for their faces, content to rub their bodies with a rough glove. Other women were making an honest penny by mounting guard over their neighbours' clothes. Each bather wraps her things together in a bundle. One woman had charge of about fifty of these.

"In spite of all their care, thefts often occur," said my interpreter. "You should hear the cries of women who can't find their clothes!"

"That is surely a serious matter," I remarked.

"Yes," was the reply; "sometimes a woman finds all stolen but her veil and *parandja*, and then she has to go home with nothing else on."

"Shocking!" I said. "Surely she might borrow a garment from one of the others!"

"No, that is the difficulty. You see each bather has with her only the clothes she has taken off, and she would be in a bad plight herself if she let any one borrow them."

The ashes are periodically raked out from under the bath and left in heaps in the passage leading to the building. Poor people find them a warm and

comfortable bed in cold weather; and the so-called *gulasha* who, preferring sleep and the narcotics which induce it to honest labour, has reduced himself to the last stage of poverty and homelessness, finds these hot ashes a good place to lie on when he has not enough clothes on his back to keep him warm. It is also a custom to cook beetroot in the cinders, and men often cook it and carry it home to their wives and children.

The proprietor came to meet us as we were leaving the bath, and on his inviting us to come to an entertainment that was to take place there in the evening, we accepted with feelings of both pleasure and curiosity. An entertainment in a bath was a novel idea. When the evening came (it was the third day of Ramazan), we left our hotel at 9 P.M.; four ladies, accompanied by four mounted police, and the *Aksakal* who rode beside our carriage, attired in a many-coloured flowing robe and a large white turban.

Arrived at the bath, we entered by the same door as in the morning, and mounted the steps which had then been so wet and slippery. Now they were dry, and the dressing-chamber, or vestibule, was carpeted with bright, soft carpets except at one corner, where the floor had been intentionally left bare. Looking up, we saw above us a gallery which we had not noticed in the morning. It surrounded us on all four sides, and was crowded with row upon

row of spectators, the first row squatting on the ground and peering out between the railings, over which the next row of heads were bending. These undulating lines of gleaming turbans, many of which were coloured, had the effect of a picturesque cornice in the wavering light of the torches. On the carpet, wedged as close to one another as herrings in a barrel, were several hundred Sarts in festive array, with turbans of every colour and description, all turning their faces eagerly to the uncarpeted corner, where three *batchas* or dancing-boys were performing to music. The musicians were seated in a row behind the *batchas* with their backs to the wall, playing on native guitars and tambourines. A brazier of charcoal stood near them on a bench, and over this they warmed the parchments of their instruments at intervals. The *batchas* are an institution peculiar to Central Asia. Dancing-boys, chosen for their beauty and girl-like appearance, they travel round the country, ten or twelve in a troupe, under a manager who is often hard and cruel. He hires them out to amuse people with their dancing, often forcing them to exert themselves beyond their strength. During the entertainments of Ramazan they sometimes dance the whole night through. They wear their hair long, shorn off a little at the forehead, and somewhat shorter than a girl's. On this occasion they wore long, coloured tunics over others of various hues, and loose trousers

which in some cases ended in high leather boots. On the backs of their heads the *batchas* in question wore embroidered caps. A turbaned Sart, holding a lighted tallow candle, stood on either side of the performers to throw light upon their faces. They twirled round and round, with uplifted hands, faster or slower according to the music. When that stopped they sank upon their knees in a row. We sent some small coins across to them when we had seen enough of this performance. Thereupon the manager of the troupe stopped the whole thing, and, as soon as there was silence, offered up a loud prayer on our behalf. This done, he made a sign for the music to strike up once more. Tired of looking at the *batchas*, my eyes wandered round the place, and I noticed many ropes extended across the ceiling; they were used for drying the men's towels in bath time (women bring their own), but now they were hung with brilliantly coloured cloths and scarfs, which added not a little to the general effect. Our English bunting would have been tame beside them. The life of the *batchas* is a very sad one. As soon as they begin to lose their girlish appearance the manager who has trained them finds them wives and starts them in a trade, but, having lived an immoral and effeminate life, they are no longer fit for hard work. Many of them, finding they cannot support a working existence, take to opium and sink into such miserable objects as the

gulashas I have described above. Honest parents are heartbroken when their sons choose this life, and do all that is in their power to dissuade them from it; but men tempt them from their homes by saying what a delightful and easy life will be theirs, till they are fired with such a desire to begin it that nothing will restrain them.

At last there came a welcome interval, during which green tea and grapes were handed to us. While we were partaking of these refreshments a musician tuned up his guitar and sang

"THE SONG OF THE BULBUL."

"There was once a beautiful lady whose name was Latifa. So beautiful was she that all who looked upon her were charmed; even the nightingale sang a new song in the night—the song of Latifa."

Latifa sees through her dark horsehair veil a handsome youth who is coming along the street, and she straightway falls in love with him. Lifting the corner of her veil, she reveals such charms that at once her love is ardently returned. But, alas! the youth's father refuses to give his consent to their union, and the lover of Latifa leaves the town in his despair. She, all disconsolate, takes her guitar and starts in search of her lost one. Some one has told her that if she were to go to the bazaar of a certain village and sing to the passers-by perchance she might find her lover, so she sets out on

her quest and sings each day in the bazaar, but all in vain. Then she takes her guitar and wanders on through the land till she comes to a village on the mountain side, where a grave is being hewn in the rock.

"Whose grave are you digging?" she asks.

"It is the grave of a stranger," the villagers reply; "we do not know his name, or whence he came, but he wandered here full of sorrow, and has died amongst us."

"Let me see him," she entreats, and they uncover for her the dead man's face.

"It is he! It is my beloved!" she cries, in an agony of grief. "Life has no longer any charm for me; let me sleep by the side of my dear one. My life is over."

"We cannot bury the living with the dead," say the villagers, "that is impossible."

Latifa continues to entreat, but in vain. Then, in despair, she takes her guitar and pours out her soul in song. Her plaintive music brings tears to every eye, and at last proves so irresistible that her request can no longer be refused. Latifa is buried in the mountain grave beside her lover, and the living and the dead are for ever united.

While this song was being sung the inevitable *chilim* was handed round among the audience. The next thing on the programme was a puppet show, a sort of Punch and Judy.

A tambourine-player converses loudly with Mr. Punch.

"Where do you come from, sir?"

"I hail from Tashkent—from the capital!" Mrs. Judy now appears and asks her husband for a new dress, whereupon the loving spouse belabours her with a stick. After that they make it up; he promises her that she shall have her wish, and goes on a journey to buy the dress. Being left alone, the lady laments that her husband has gone to Tashkent and left her disconsolate. Suddenly she utters a cry of joy, her husband reappears; he had, it seems, not gone to Tashkent at all, but merely hidden himself to test her love for him. They embrace, and the curtain falls.

I had plenty of time during these performances to study the faces of the audience, and what struck me particularly was the absence of boys. Women, of course, I had not expected to see, for the only public entertainments in which *they* join are weddings.

"Boys seldom come to these functions," explained my interpreter; "they find them dull, and prefer to play at cards instead. Cards," she added, "have become quite a passion with the Sarts of late."

As it was getting late, and the rest of the audience had no intention of leaving before daybreak, we thanked our host for his hospitality and rose to go. Thus ended our first entertainment in a public bath.

CHAPTER XVI

COMMON AILMENTS

No description of Turkestan would be complete without some account of the peculiar ailments to which its people are subject. With regard to one of them, here is an interesting paragraph from a work on Bokhara published in 1747: "The water of the little river that runs through the city is very bad, breeding in the legs of those who drink it worms an ell long, between the flesh and the skin, which, working out about an inch, are rolled up and thus extracted. But if they break in the operation the patient dies. For all this inconvenience it is there forbidden to drink any other liquor but water or mare's milk; such as break that law being whipped through the markets."[1] If their law did not forbid them to drink standing water, many a Sart of my acquaintance would have been buried

[1] The earliest positive reference to the existence of this worm—the guinea worm—is apparently that of Plutarch, who quotes a description of it as occurring on the shores of the Red Sea, by a writer who lived in the second century before Christ. It has frequently been introduced into America by the importation of infected negroes from those parts of Africa where it is common.—*Clemow's "Geography of Disease,"* 1903.

long ago. The worm alluded to is the *rishte* (*Filaria medinensis*). While in Bokhara I saw one two yards in length, and I have brought home a specimen preserved in spirit. A man may become its victim through drinking water from the canal that runs through his courtyard, or from one of the reservoirs in which the horses are washed. It is the special business of the head-shavers to extract these creatures, and you can see them at their occupation under the trees in summer time. The patient does not necessarily die if the *rishte* breaks, though he becomes seriously ill and suffers from fever. Women, whose secluded life protects them from exposure to heat and thirst, are less tempted to drink the water unboiled. They keep large clay pitchers full of boiled water ready for use, and are consequently less troubled with the *rishte*, or with that dreadful ulcer that comes on the cheek,[1] called "the Sart disease," "the Afghan rose," "the Persian beauty spot," or "the Aleppo button," according to the land in which it is found. This ulcer is especially prevalent in Askhabad, where most of the natives suffer from it; even Russian settlers are its victims. In Askhabad people get it from merely washing in unboiled water, and as it always lasts twelve months, the Persian settlers there call it *Salek*, or "one year."

Their treatment of erysipelas is peculiar. We had promised while in Kokand to call on a certain

[1] The Oriental sore.

Hadj Matkowe Mahzoum, but he fell ill before the day arrived, and a Sart doctor was sent for to cure his swollen face.

"Where did the Sart doctor study?" I asked of the sick man's brother.

"At the great school of medicine in Bokhara," was his reply; "he has studied medicine-books brought from Bombay. He is a mullah — all mullahs know something of medicine, but those who have studied in Bokhara get higher fees."

"What has he done for the sick man?"

"He buried some milk in the earth for two days, then mixed it up with flour and an herb, and put it on Mahzoum's face, which he then gashed with a knife in several places."

I crossed Mahzoum's name off my visiting list after this, and told the guide not to take us to see him till he was better; but, as fate would have it, we were conducted to his house by mistake, and, walking suddenly in upon him, were more than startled at his appearance. Lying on the floor in a steady draught, with door and windows wide open — the windows had shutters, but no glass—he was covered with a cotton quilt up to his chin; another rolled up beneath his head did duty as a pillow. His face, daubed with a thick coating of the ointment prescribed by the Sart doctor, was the colour of the yolk of an egg, and his eyes appeared to look at us through a hideous

mask. He tried to lift his head and welcome us, but he was too ill to speak or do anything but roll his head from side to side. Our commiseration was profound, but we hurried away as soon as we had expressed our pity by gestures rather than words. The next day a friend of his, meeting us accidentally, stooped down and touching the ground with his open palm, explained to us, with the little Russian he could muster, that Mahzoum had expired a few hours after our visit, and been buried that very morning. So much for the treatment of erysipelas by a Sart doctor!

In Kokand there are many sufferers from a kind of goitre,[1] which Sven Hedin is mistaken in considering peculiar to Yarkand. It hangs under its victim's chin, often as large as his head. When the train comes into the station goitres are the first thing you notice in the native crowd, and you meet with them constantly in the streets and in the bazaars. A professor in one of the medresses told me that the goitre was often hereditary; but Russian doctors do not believe this, they say it must be the result either of drinking snow-water from the neighbouring mountains, or, what is more likely, of some peculiarity of the soil, which affects the water in the canals. I did not hear of any European suffering from it.

[1] This goitre is mainly found where people live on a magnesium-limestone soil.—*The Geography of Disease.*

Malarial fevers are the cause of half the deaths. I did not visit a single town, Russian or native, where fever of one kind or another was not more or less prevalent. Sometimes they come upon the people like an epidemic and carry off thousands at a time. When I visited Bokhara in September 1896 every house seemed to contain an invalid, while the streets were full of sick people lying helplessly about with fever upon them. In every native town of any size, Bokhara included, there is now a Russian apothecary, a doctor, and a lady doctor, with hospitals for native men and women respectively. Quinine is given in doses of five grains to fever patients; but there is a growing feeling against this remedy on account of its effect upon the head.

There is a sickness met with in Sart towns for which the Russians say they have not yet found a name. White spots appear on hands and face, and the Sarts often mistake it for leprosy. They call it *Pess*, and isolate individuals who show signs of it, banishing them to villages called *Mahon Kishlaks*. Leprosy is to be met with everywhere; for, though the lepers are banished to separate villages, they come into the towns and beg in the bazaars. We saw groups of these terrible-looking objects in the Rigestan at Samarkand, where they persistently held out their fingerless hands for alms. It is said that many of them make a good

living by holding the horses of visitors to the ruined mosques. They intermarry among themselves, and their children develop it also, but only late in life. There is a leper hospital at Tashkent under Russian management. Sometimes a leper, ignorant of the nature of his complaint, continues to live with his family for years after the disease has taken hold of him.

The Russian lady doctors lead a busy life, for Sart women are beginning to have confidence in them, and give them more work already than they can possibly get through. They are assisted by Tatár nurses, who speak the Turki language, and are indispensable as interpreters. A lady doctor told me that many of the women's complaints were due to the secluded life they lead, and to the want of proper exercise for the body. Maternity patients only come to the hospitals when an operation is necessary. A Sart once said to me—

"Russian doctors like to perform operations, ours don't. When I broke my leg I went to a Sart doctor."

"And how did he set it?" I asked.

"He put wooden splints round it," was the reply, "then he bound it up tight, and wrapped it in sand mixed with yolk of egg and oil. Then he gave me some black pills, and my leg got better."

As the town of Bokhara has about fifty thousand inhabitants, and only one Russian doctor, it is

perhaps as well that the natives should be able to set their own bones. It was in Bokhara that a Sart said to me—

"For external ailments I would go to the Russian doctor, but for internal ones I would always employ a Sart."

"Why," I asked, "do you not send your students to study medicine in Europe?"

"We should like to do it," was the reply, "but medicine is the most dangerous study for a man's religion; we fear our young men would lose more than they would gain. We have seen the effect that European learning has had upon Persian doctors, and we dare not expose our sons to such influence."

"We had a great doctor here once," he continued; "he died six hundred years ago, but his book is still studied in Bokhara. He was a nephew of the great Timur, and his name was Ulug Beg."[1]

"You mean the astronomer?" I said.

"Yes," replied the Sart. "He shut himself up for ten years in an observatory, and then wrote a book on the stars."

[1] The astronomical tables of this prince are divided into four parts. The first treats of eras and epochs; the second of the knowledge of the times; the third of the course of the planets; and the fourth of the fixed stars, in two hundred sections, A.D. 1437. These are considered the most correct of all those which have been given us by Mohammedans, and they agree very well with those of Tycho Brahé. John Greaves, the great English mathematician, translated the tables of fixed stars in 1650.—*D'Herbelot.*

See note to Sir C. Markham's translation of Clavijo's narrative.

Sart doctors also do a little dentistry. The way in which they extract teeth will sound familiar. The patient is locked into a room, where he must remain until the teeth is out. The doctor ties a cord to the tooth, and, holding the other end firmly in one hand, applies a red-hot iron to the patient's cheek, whereupon the latter gives a violent jump backwards, and out comes the tooth. Although I never heard of a case, smallpox must be common in Turkestan, for out of every crowd a large proportion of the faces are pock-marked.

Having enumerated some of the diseases to which a Sart may fall a victim, I now come to the particulars of his burial. Whether his death has been a sudden one or not, there is no *post-mortem* examination, for such a thing would be against the law of Mohammed. If a man dies, it is the will of Allah, and that is enough. When a man thinks he is going to die, the same fatalism keeps him calm. Nalivkin tells of a mullah who read his own funeral service.

As soon as life is extinct the jaws are bound with a cloth, to prevent the lower one from falling. The relatives, together with the people who have come to wash the corpse, start a loud wail. The body is then wrapped in a white cloth, and carried on a bier to the mosque, where a mullah reads verses from the Koran over it. During the service after Ramazan in Kokand, when the square in front of the chief mosque was crowded with worshippers, the

friends of a man who had just died tried to force their way in, lifting the bier high over the heads of the crowd. The Russian police were obliged to order them back; but I could not help feeling sorry for them, for they had evidently thought that the prayers of the multitude would tell in the dead man's favour before Allah's throne.

From the mosque the bier is carried to the graveyard, followed in solemn silence by all the male relatives. Each man carries a stick and a dark blue handkerchief in sign of mourning. As there is no coffin, the grave, which is only three feet below the surface, is dug in such a manner that, when the body has been lowered into it, it can be slipped into a niche hollowed out in the side, and thus no earth is thrown upon it in filling up the grave. The head is always laid towards the north. Nalivkin says that at rich men's funerals a coin wrapped in paper is given to each guest. The men who wash the body put on a glove so as not to touch it. The body is usually put into a kind of bag with a hole at each end, then the two ends are tied up. In some parts the women go to the grave early on the day after the burial; in others they do not go till the seventh day. They do not place fruit upon the grave, as some travellers affirm, but bread and money.

The feasting of the relatives is sometimes accompanied by a kind of mournful dancing, the dancers working themselves slowly into a kind of frenzy,

which sometimes ends in tearing the hair and distorting the face. For three days after a death the family is expected to do no cooking for themselves, but to live upon what their relatives bring them.

Nalivkin describes a very strange custom observed by the Sarts of Fergana. It is known as *Kir*, or "soiled linen." On the eighth, or sometimes the fortieth day after the funeral, friends and relations gather at the house, and one of the female relatives washes all the linen that was worn by the family at the funeral; she then gives a piece of soap to each guest, that he may wash the linen he wore on that occasion.

Men do not wear regular mourning, but women put on blue for slight, and black for deep mourning. On one occasion, the ladies of the household having taken longer than usual to prepare for my reception, I was surprised to find that, instead of being decked out more finely than usual, they were all attired in what I may describe as grey cotton nightdresses, with handkerchiefs to match folded over their heads in such a way that one corner hung down the back. Not a trace of colour, not a single ornament, although the husband had in no way prepared me for the sight of so doleful a group. He met me as I returned to his part of the house with profuse apologies for this absence of display. Strange as it seems, the men, who do not think it necessary to go into mourning themselves, enforce this custom strictly upon their wives. On this particular

occasion the husband was dressed like a brilliant butterfly, as though he had wished to make up in his own person for what was lacking in the appearance of the ladies.

A faithful servant of the Czar, who has lived among the Sarts, and had intimate dealings with them for more than thirty years, said to me: "They are not a bad lot on the whole, but some of their ways are mighty strange, to say the least of it. I have seen them go laughing to a funeral and burst into wailing when they got to the grave. I have heard men reading aloud, with great solemnity, books of which they could not understand a word, and with all their pretended piety it would be hard for any one to live a more immoral life than theirs, if you take them as a whole."

"Recount me more of your personal experience in connection with them," I entreated.

"Well," replied the old man, "to show you what ridiculous notions they have about the seclusion of women, let me tell you that ten years ago when there was an outbreak of cholera in Namangan, and it was my duty to go round with the soldiers to collect the dead bodies, they actually refused to let the corpse of a woman be placed on the same cart with that of a man, and I was compelled to send for another conveyance for the female bodies. Had they been at all consistent, they would surely have raised an objection to my burying men and women in the same grave, but this they did not do."

CHAPTER XVII

ISRAEL IN CENTRAL ASIA

THE Bokharan Jews are as much a part of the population of Turkestan as the English Jews are of London. Questioned about their ancestry, they will tell you they are descendants of those Israelites who were taken prisoners by the kings of Assyria and Babylon, and brought by them to Central Asia between six and seven hundred years before the time of Christ. Both in Bokhara and in Samarkand there is still a Jewish quarter; but in the other provinces we find their houses scattered among those of the Sarts, without any outward distinction. Their position under the successive Mohammedan conquerors was not an enviable one, and no one perhaps owes more to the beneficial changes wrought by Russia than the Bokharan Jew. He is quite aware of what Russia has done for him, and by showing himself an honest and friendly citizen under the new regime, he has won a place in the Russian's regard that is in no way shared by his brother the Polish Jew. Leaving the despicable practice of usury to the Hindoo settlers, the Jews of Bokhara devote themselves principally to the dyeing of native silk, and

you can generally tell a Hebrew from a Sart by the purple stain upon his hands, as well as by his distinctive features. They also do a good deal of trade with other countries, and have the advantage of being able to find agents, of their own race, in all the trading cities of Europe. So good a character have they won by their honourable and upright dealings that to-day the Russian man of business relies implicitly on the word of an unconverted Bokharan Jew, while he is exceedingly doubtful about that of an Armenian, or even a so-called Christian.

"We trust the word of a Bokharan Jew," said a Russian banker, when I was asking him about them. "A Bokharan Jew could go to Russia and bring all Moscow back on bare credit. Every one would trust him. Polish and Lithuanian Jews may not live in Moscow, but the Bokharans have a right to settle there."

This reminds me of a conversation I had with a wealthy German Jew who had settled in the neighbourhood of Namangan, and by whom we were received with much kindness.

"Tell me about England," he said. "Can a Jew marry a Christian in your country?"

"Yes," I replied; "we have no law against it."

At this he looked incredulous. "It is not so in Russia," he replied. "My wife is a Christian, and before I could marry her I had to become one."

Jews living in towns governed by an Amir still feel some of the old restraints; a number of families have even turned Mohammedan to avoid them. A Jew living in Bokhara cannot grow rich, no one can, for the native government will not let even the Sarts do so. The richest Israelite there has not more than a hundred thousand roubles. That is one reason why Bokharan Jews are moving so fast into actual Russian territory; another is that the Amir imposes double duty on all goods imported by them into his Khanate. Many of the best houses in the Russian town of Kokand belong to Jews. Well-to-do families whom I had visited in Bokhara five years before were established in European houses in Kokand and Tashkent when I inquired after them in 1902.

The Mohammedans of Central Asia have an aversion to their Jewish neighbours. In old times they would not let them enter their houses. In Bokhara they prohibit them from wearing either turban or girdle, and, whether they will or no, their head-covering must be a special kind of black cap, which distinguishes them at once, while round their loins they are obliged to wear a distinctive belt. They may not ride on horses or mules, but have to restrict themselves to donkeys. If a Jew meets a Mussulman in the street he is expected to dismount and make way for him. The only people whom the Turkomans did not kidnap were the Jews, their

reason for passing them over being that no Mohammedan would buy a Jewish slave. Marriage between Jew and Mussulman is of course strictly forbidden, yet for all this many a Mohammedan youth has been smitten by the charms of a beautiful Jewish maiden. For their own safety the Jewish women wear the Sart *parandja* and horse-hair veil when out of doors, so that they cannot be distinguished from Mohammedan women in the street. In their own homes they mix as freely with the men as they would in Europe.

"The Jewesses of Bokhara are *Bildschön*," said a gentleman in whose company we crossed the Caspian, and my own eyes confirmed the truth of that statement later on. More beautiful faces than those of some of the girls between twelve and sixteen I could never wish to see; oval in shape, with exquisite complexions, tiny coral mouths, perfect teeth, delicate, almost Grecian noses, pretty little ears and arched eyebrows, beautiful dark eyes, and raven hair. A Russian merchant, who is now the husband of a charming European wife and the father of a family, confessed to me that when he came as a young man to Bokhara ten years ago, he was so overcome by the beauty of a young Jewess that he was ready to turn heaven and earth to get her father's consent to her becoming a Christian and marrying him. The father was obdurate, however, and the girl was very soon married to one of her own

people. Polygamy is not forbidden by the Jews; they may have as many wives as they like. When calling at a rich house in Samarkand we found six pretty little girls playing in the garden. They were gaily dressed in native silks of many colours, and wore gold-embroidered caps, over which were tied gaudy silk handkerchiefs of which the predominant colour was a rose pink. Hearing that the head of the family was not at home, we asked if we could see his wife.

"We are his wives," said one of the juvenile group, and she pointed to herself and another girl. Neither of them could have reached her thirteenth year.

It would be almost impossible to find an unmarried Jewess over eighteen years of age. Living a less secluded life than the Sart women, they develop more character, and often make their own choice of a husband. In one of the families we visited, a girl had chosen one man, but been forced by her father to marry another. Determined to have her own way, she made her husband's life so miserable that he insisted upon giving her up. Another husband was chosen for her, but she treated him even worse, and at last he too was glad to get rid of her. Eventually it was thought best to let her have her own way, and she married the man of her choice.

The Jews will not touch bread or wine that has not been made by their own people. Until seventy

years ago Samarkand had no special Jewish quarter; the grandfather of the present Amir of Bokhara drove the Jews out of the Sart town, and forced them to build the present ghetto, because they would persist in throwing their household refuse into the canals, and thus making the water impure. Most writers state that the Amir does not allow Jews in his Khanate to wear silken robes, but all the rich ones wore them when I was there in 1896, and many of them do so still.

We visited a number of synagogues both in Bokhara and Samarkand. The women sit in a gallery, just as they do in England; there is a sort of fretwork screen in front of them that reminds one of the ladies' gallery in the House of Commons. The writers who tell us that Sart women go to the mosques and worship behind such screens have evidently mistaken this Jewish custom for a Mohammedan one. Sart women never worship in the mosques. The synagogues are built round courtyards like the Sart dwelling-houses. One in Samarkand has five apartments. I was interested to find that the Jews make pilgrimages to Jerusalem as devoutly as the Mussulmans. It must be exceedingly painful to them to see the mosque of Omar standing on the very site of their ancient temple. However, they have in the Holy City a synagogue especially for pilgrims, called "Bethel." Their route used to be through Afghanistan, Herat,

Bombay, and Jaffa. Many pilgrims stay so long in Jerusalem that they pick up new habits and customs. I remember having seen in Jerusalem the houses of Bokharan Jews who preferred to remain in Palestine. They are quite European. The floors of the synagogues are covered with felt made of camels' hair, except near the altar, where there is usually a handsome Bokharan rug. Scrolls of Scripture some three feet in length are kept in wooden cupboards, each scroll wrapped in a costly cover of silk and gold brocade. There is a lobby in which the worshippers took off their goloshes before entering. Underneath or close to the synagogue there is always a school for little children, who sit in groups upon the floor, with their heels tucked under them. They struck me from a little distance as a mass of warm colour, being most of them dressed in pink cotton. On the wall of one school I noticed an instrument of torture, used, as I was informed by the teacher, to bring delinquents to a proper state of mind. It was called a *falaka*, and consisted of a stick with leather thongs, not for beating, but for worrying the children in some complicated manner. Immediately opposite the entrance of the chief synagogue was a Jewish butcher's shop.

"The Jews here are Sarts in everything but their religion," said our companion as we walked away; and then I remembered some remarks made by a Russian in Tashkent, in a conversation I had with

him about the Sarts in his vicinity. He had said that the Sarts of Tashkent had a great deal of Jewish blood in their veins and much of the Jewish character.

"The Sarts have the monopoly of the cotton trade, just as the Jews have the dyeing of silk," he said. "They are shrewd business men. A man will hire out his wife to another if he is short of money, and take her back afterwards. The early Russian settlers often hired women in that way, not only in Tashkent but all over the country."

"How did the Sarts come by their Jewish blood?" I had asked.

"Through the Chaldean Nestorians and the Jews of Bokhara," was the reply. "There have been two distinct Jewish influences; the former includes that of the Semitic Arabs."

A lady who had been present at a Jewish wedding the day before we reached Samarkand, described it to us as an unusually interesting one. It seems that in the middle of the ceremony the bride's father insisted that the bridegroom should sign a document to the effect that the bride might be at liberty to return to her home—that is, to Samarkand from Tashkent, a twelve hours' journey by rail—as often as she felt inclined to do so. He did this because his other daughter's husband objected to giving his wife such freedom. The bridegroom got very angry, and in a loud and surly voice refused to comply. This unseemly quarrel took place before

the eyes of the assembled guests, and the conclusion of the ceremony was postponed for some hours.

"Poor bride!" I ventured to remark.

"The bride!" said my friend, "why, she covered her face with her hands and pretended her heart was breaking, but I could see her looking out between her fingers and smiling with repressed amusement. She is only fifteen, the bridegroom is nineteen."

CHAPTER XVIII

AFGHANS AND OTHERS

"In the entrails of an ox you will find no meat.
In an Afghan—no friendship."—*Sart Proverb.*

THERE are various opinions about Isaakhan, the Afghan chief who resides in Samarkand. Some English people think that Russia is preserving him to be her puppet in the day when she has her own way with the Buffer State. Many Russians, on the other hand, will tell you that the man is a useless humbug. I have also heard that he is for an Asiatic "a charming man to meet in society." Whatever may be the truth about Isaakhan, his countrymen form an interesting part of the foreign element in Sart towns, where they may be known by their peculiar type of face, tall figures, and blue-grey turbans. Their type of countenance has been rightly described as partly Jewish, partly Spanish in character; they have receding foreheads, straight black hair, hooked noses, and black eyes, with a defiant, warlike bearing. Russian officers say that, but for one grave fault, which nullifies all their good points, the Afghans would make the finest soldiers in the world. Courage, daring, coolness in danger,

powers of endurance are theirs; but with all these, they are unstable as water. As long as it suits his purpose the Afghan will be true to his leader, his master, or his brother, but there is no sense of honour in his heart, no nobility of soul. He is ready to rob, cheat, or murder even his nearest of kin if it suits his purpose to do so. His fiery blood is up on the most trivial provocation, and in spite of the manliness, politeness, and modesty of his outward bearing, which compares so favourably with that of many of his neighbours, he will stoop, when provoked, to the most dastardly of crimes. An Austrian writer assures his readers that the soldiers of Bokhara are looked upon by Central Asians generally as the worst fighters on the face of the earth, but that the Afghans have a still greater contempt for the *English,* whom they — the Afghans — would have crushed long ago but for the lack of proper weapons. It is well sometimes to see ourselves as others see us. "Afghanistan," says Townsend, "which the English think about as a turbulent little kingdom on the skirts of their own dominion, is 40,000 square miles larger than France."

A Bokharan, speaking to me of the Afghans in 1902, referred to the fact that a party of pilgrims to Mecca, who had recently attempted to pass through Afghanistan, had been attacked and robbed of all they possessed. Some of them were killed; the rest were forced to return to Bokhara and go

by way of the Caspian. "Afghans are poor," he said; "their country is most of it barren mountains, they take all they can from others. We have many Afghan merchants living in Bokhara. An Afghan political agent came here not long since disguised as a merchant that he might see the Bokharans on political business, but the Russians detected him and sent him back."

Afghan gipsies are constantly to be seen in the streets and bazaars. Their women go about with uncovered faces, and work a good deal harder than the men. Their handicraft is basket-making, but they take alms when they can get them. Some live in Sart villages, others camp out in tents which they bring with them.

It is a strange thing that, while there is no love lost between the Afghan and the Jew, the Afghan will tell you with pride that he is a descendant of those Israelites who were carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon. Being Mohammedans, the Afghan merchants in Bokhara have many advantages over their Jewish rivals, the chief one being that they have no greater import duties to pay than the Bokharans themselves. I have already alluded to the fact that while the Sart carries his shroud as a turban the Afghan carries it as a girdle. Some think that the Afghans are Jews who have become Aryanised, others that they are a mixture of a Jewish element with the original Indo-Germanic

inhabitants. The old name for an Afghan was *Paktu*, which, as Werth observes, is a name given by Persians to their children, and it also occurs as the name of a town in Thracian Chersones. "In India," says Bellew, "this people is known by the name of Pathan, which is merely the Hindustani form for Pukhtana—the plural of Pukhtan."

There is a pretty story told in Samarkand about one of the Afghan prisoners who were set at liberty by the Russian Minister of War in 1901. He had been greatly touched by the kind treatment he had received at the hand of his jailer, and on receiving his freedom he said: "If I ever become a minister, I shall send all the money I can get to this kind-hearted jailer."

One of the mounted policemen in Kokand, whose duty it was to accompany us on our rounds, had a face for all the world like a Chinaman, and the musicians who performed at an entertainment given in our honour at Andijan would easily have passed for Celestials, but for the missing pigtail. They were all Dungans. The home of these people is really Kashgar. You find them all over Central Asia, but they only come to make money, and rarely bring their women with them. They are Chinese Mussulmans. There is quite a large sprinkling of them in Margelan. On further investigation I discovered that our *jigit* or policeman in Kokand was to all intents and purposes

a naturalised Sart. He had even married a Sart woman, and had no thought of returning eastward. The present Minister of War at St. Petersburg, Kuropatkin, wrote a book on Kashgaria in his younger days. At the foot of one of its pages there is a note about the people in question. "The story as to the origin of the Dungans which most merits attention, and which I heard in the town of Koocha, is as follows: 'When Chingiz Khan advanced on Pekin he had in his army many Mussulmans from Eastern Turkestan; when he took possession of Pekin he appointed his son Mangoo (or Mandgoo) governor of China. With Mangoo he left many Mussulmans in China, who from that time have received the name of Toorgan, which means *those left behind*.'"

The Tatárs are another foreign element in Sart towns. They think themselves vastly superior to the Sarts, and those from Kazan have not forgotten the important part their ancestors once played in the world's history. I have already said that I was often glad to have the help of a Tatár woman as interpreter. One of these came to me in Samarkand with a jaunty blue velvet cap covered with gold embroidery set coquettishly on one side of her head. She told me that her husband was a Russian, and her son an officer in the Russian army.

Besides Tatárs from Kazan, there are many from

the Crimea; numbers, too, have come down from Siberia. A Russian officer, a Tatár by birth and religion, whose wife is a Sart lady, educated in St. Petersburg, was discussing with me the position of his wife's countrywomen.

"Which," he asked, "do you think best? that all the women should have husbands as here, or that only two-thirds of them should have a chance of marriage as in England?"

In Namangan, a province as large as Holland, there is only one garden of any size devoted to the cultivation of flowers; its owner is a Tatár, and so successful has he proved with his hobby that when the Governor-General passed through he was taken to see this garden as one of the sights of the neighbourhood. The father of its owner came from Moscow to Namangan at about twenty years of age. After he had been there seventy years he decided to pay a visit to Moscow, saying, "I must go and see my old friends once in a while." He went, and after a short stay in Russia returned safely to his adopted home.

"How old are you?" asked a Russian friend in Namangan, some time after his return.

"Oh, I am only ninety-eight."

Not crediting this statement, the Russian asked the son how old his father really was.

"He was a hundred and two last birthday," was the reply.

"But he told me he was only ninety-eight."

"Ah, that was because he wants to marry again, and is anxious to make himself out as young as possible."

As servants Tatárs are often preferred to Russians, on account of the abstemiousness which their religion forces upon them. Being strict Mohammedans, they should drink nothing stronger than water.

Of the Hindu money-changers I have already spoken. They have their caravanserais in all the towns, and are known by the Sarts as *Multani*. Their chief business and *raison d'être* is usury, but they give themselves an air of respectability by doing a little honest trade as well. Their influence on the Sarts being anything but good, their presence in Russian territory is rather resented by the authorities. In Bokhara they trade in wool and fruits from Afghanistan. The tea trade there is almost entirely in the hands of Indians from Peshawar. They put their earnings in the Russo-Chinese Bank, which has now a branch in Bokhara proper, as well as in the Russian colony of that name. As no coffee is drunk by the Sarts, the consumption of tea is enormous. Great quantities of it are now being sent from China through rich Indian merchants. Though the Indians possess English passports, they have lived so long in Turkestan that they have even forgotten how to

speak Hindustani. I did, however, find one in Bokhara who remembered a few words of English. They are anything but warlike in either appearance or character, and prefer going to India by the circuitous route of Batoum rather than facing the turbulent Afghans in their own territory. Some of them, Brahmins, have the sacred mark upon their foreheads.

The long strings of camels—thirty, forty, and fifty in single file—that one meets in the towns every market-day belong to the Kirgiz, about whom, as also about the Turkomans, I must speak elsewhere.

CHAPTER XIX

ANIMALS AND INSECTS.

A SART lady of the upper class never goes out on foot. Some never go out at all, from the day of their marriage to the day of their death, but those who do are conveyed to their destination in an *arba* or native cart, the wheels of which are some six feet in diameter. The *arba* is made entirely of wood, and each huge wheel is a young elm bent into shape. The shafts are joined together by a strap going over the horse's back, to prevent the weight falling on its neck. The driver sits in a saddle on the back of the horse, with his feet resting on the shafts. When going uphill he stands up and presses with all his might upon the shafts, to prevent the *arba* from overbalancing. At the same time he screeches like an owl in the animal's ears to spur it on. I shall never forget the unearthly noises made by a driver we passed at a steep place on the road to Chyust. The high wheels of the *arba* are invaluable in a country covered with bridgeless canals. Raised high above the ground, the *arba* passes safely over water three and four feet deep; and when a river is deeper than that,

the horses swim across with the *arba* borne up behind them like a boat. Russians use covered *arbas* for longer journeys, and fit them up so that they can be placed upon the ground and slept in, like tents. Sportsmen use them thus for weeks together.

Women of the middle class are constantly to be seen riding in *arbas*, often five or six of them together with their children round them, but oftener still they are on horseback, either behind their husbands on horse or donkey, or riding alone. One of the most comical sights imaginable is a Sart woman—veil, *parandja*, and all—riding straddle on a tiny Samarkand donkey, so near the ground that her feet almost touch it. Everybody rides in Turkestan, even the beggars in the streets are frequently mounted, and one is reminded of the old adage, "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride."

When a Sart woman rides behind her husband he sits in the saddle, and she on the horse's bare back, with her arms round his waist. If one of the children joins the party it rides behind its mother. I have seen a father riding with three children behind him. Rich men cover their horses' backs with velvet cloths embroidered in silver and gold, and covered with turquoises. I never saw any in the streets, but people used to show them to us, together with their fine robes and jewellery, when

we visited their houses. Horses are shod at the street corners or in the bazaar, where two poles stuck in the ground with one across, in the form of the letter H, serve to keep the animal steady while the shoe is being put on. The horse stands under the horizontal pole, and is strapped to it, so as to be supported, like a child learning to swim. The native horseshoe can be bent when cold. Donkeys in Central Asia are almost as small as our English ones, but very much stronger. The amount they can carry with ease is astonishing; and they are credited with even more intelligence than the horses, but no Sart of any position would care to be seen riding on one, as that would be beneath his dignity. Mules are ridden a great deal, especially by countrymen coming to market. They are of all sizes and colours.

Dogs are not pets in a Sart household. Looked upon as unclean animals, they are not allowed to enter the houses. Most of the dogs that wander in the streets are ownerless, and pick up a living as best they can, as a Russian friend in Fergana found to his cost, when a batch of them, mad with hunger, flew into his courtyard and almost tore to shreds a live sheep that friends in Bokhara had recently sent him as a present. So furious was their attack that our friend mistook them for wolves at the first onset, and rushed out upon them with his rifle. Neighbours came to his aid, and the dogs, receiving blows that

brought them to their senses, made a dash for the entrance through which they had come, and disappeared to be seen no more. Our friend still mourns the loss of his sheep, which was a particularly fine one.

"In Bokhara," said he, in a plaintive voice, "this catastrophe could not have happened, for there the dogs promenade on the roofs of the houses, and there are never any in the street."

"How do you account for that?" I asked.

"It is because the Bokharans have a habit of throwing all their meat-bones on the roof when done with, and the dogs know where to find them," he replied.

Bokhara is famous for its beautiful, long-haired cats. A finer breed of the feline race one could not wish to see. They have bushy tails and silky hair. They too walk about on the roofs, but the best specimens we saw were children's pets in Russian houses. Sarts keep them also in their houses, and have many other pets as well.

In the courtyard of a rich Sart in Namangan I found a peacock strutting proudly about, as if the place belonged to him; a female stag that one of the sons had caught in the neighbouring mountains, two falcons, a cat, a duck, and an owl. Our host, wishing to show us the character of his falcon, fetched a dead chicken, destined for the *pilau*, and dangled it over the bird's head. Half asleep till

that moment, it suddenly roused itself and, darting at the tempting prey, would have pulled it in pieces in a twinkle, if its master had not extricated it with difficulty from its claws. Falcons are kept for the sport they give, rather than for the sake of the game they catch. In the old days every Khan had his falcon, and the first man in his Khanate was the *Cushbeggi* or chief falconer; the title is still held by the Amir's Prime Minister in Bokhara. Marco Polo relates that one of the Khans of Khiva had 10,000 falconers who accompanied him in his hunting expeditions, and the Sultan Baber tells in his book how another Khan, hearing of the death of a favourite falcon, exclaimed—

"I would rather have heard that my son had broken his neck!"

The wild doves that hover under the eaves in quantities are almost the same colour as the mud walls of the houses. In size they resemble our English starling, but are, if anything, a little smaller. No Sart ever thinks of hurting these birds, while the remembrance that Christ "came in semblance of a dove" restrains the Russians from touching them. Native bird-cages are made with string, not unlike those one sees in the streets of Italy; they look like shrimp-nets turned upside down. Small birds are kept in them for fighting purposes, and men earn their living by providing their neighbours with this cruel sport, which, we

must remember, was popular in England[1] till the middle of the nineteenth century.

Ducks and turkeys have been recently introduced by the Russians; but there is, among the wild-fowl high up in the mountains, an indigenous bird of the partridge family, called the "mountain turkey."

Locusts do great harm to the agricultural country round Tashkent. They come in swarms in early summer. The Government sent a Russian officer to France in 1901 to see a man named Vermorel at Villefranche, who has patented a poison to be spread over the fields by means of a special kind of douche invented for the purpose. The officer brought back ten such douches, and an order has been sent for a hundred more. Perhaps some day they will try to conquer the locusts by means of screens and ditches, a method that we English have adopted with so much success in the island of Cyprus.

Insects abound in Turkestan as in all hot countries. The canals are noisy with frogs at certain seasons of the year, and snakes of various kinds are to be found, but only two are poisonous. The smallest boa in existence, *Eryx jaculus*, is found on the steppe; it catches and swallows its prey in true boa style. A spider known as the *Phalanga* is found both in the deserts and in the towns. It is said to be the largest spider in the world. Its sting is poisonous, but it does not kill. A much

[1] See the account of one in "Lavengro."

more dreaded enemy is the *Karakut* (*Lactrodectus lugubris*), a little black spider, which is said to kill even a camel with its deadly poison. The Sarts say its poison will kill a man, but Europeans have had no proof of this. They also say that sheep eat these dangerous little creatures, and that they will never come near a sheep's skin, so that to wrap oneself in one when sleeping out of doors is the best safeguard against them.

The local museums contain specimens of all the insects of any importance that have as yet been discovered by Russian naturalists. And this is well, as the traveller might otherwise find it difficult to distinguish between the fact and the fiction with which the hospitable colonists are ready to overwhelm him. The tarantula is found occasionally. The Sarts say that its sting can be rendered harmless by rubbing the part stung with the body of another tarantula. Scorpions are numerous in hot weather; they conceal themselves in the rush matting of the floors and ceilings, but they only sting when angry. Fleas are found everywhere, but bugs were unknown until their introduction by European settlers. Such big lizards are found in the steppe that I have heard them described as "quite like crocodiles." In Namangan we heard of a kind called by the Sarts *tchkemar*. They are frequently a yard in length, and are addicted to sucking the milk of goats.

The Sarts do not eat fish, though the Jews think it a great delicacy, and the Russians fish a great deal in the canals round Tashkent. A peculiar kind of sturgeon is found in the Amu Daria (Jaxartes). It has received the name of *Skaphirhunchus Kaufmanni*, in honour of the first governor-general, who took a great interest in its discovery. It is almost extinct; but I am told that a kind something like it has been found in the Mississippi. The nose of this sturgeon is shaped like a shield. I saw one preserved in the museum at Askhabad.

CHAPTER XX

SART FAIRY TALES

"WHAT is that pile of books in the corner?" I asked of a bright young lady who was our hostess on one occasion.

"Those are histories of wars of ancient times," she replied; "they are in the Sart language, and I can read them."

"Have you nothing else to read?"

"Oh yes, we have several stories of travel, written by Sarts who have been to Mecca."

"Do you ever read aloud to your children?"

"Yes, we read to them, but generally tell them stories; though, as we have not many, we keep them for the winter."

I was anxious to hear a few of these popular tales, but, though I succeeded in persuading a sharp little boy to tell me one, my Tatár interpreter was not in a humour to translate it, so I only gathered that it was about a poor little duckling that fell into a pond. Nalivkin relates several that are current in Fergana; and, as they have never got further than the Russian language, I will give my own translation of them.

THE FORTY VIZIERS.

Once upon a time there was a sultan who had forty viziers, but one of them was his particular favourite, and on him he showered both presents and favours. The thirty-nine viziers, who were left out in the cold, began at last to grow very jealous of the favourite. They vowed they would bring about his ruin, and put their heads together to see how best they could do it. Then they went to the sultan and said—

"O Sultan, how greatly would the appearance of thy palace grounds be improved if they contained a few acres of standing water. Thou hast but to command thy favourite, he can manage this for thee."

The Sultan, being pleased with the idea, called the vizier and commanded him to construct a lake in front of the palace within a given time. The poor favourite trembled in his shoes, for he saw through the device of his enemies. In a land where water was so scarce, how could he possibly dig a lake and fill it with water, and in so short a time too? In his despair he fled into the desert that he might think out some plan of escape. All at once Mohammed appeared to him in the form of a mullah and said—

"Here are two halves of a walnut-shell; place them on the spot where the lake is to be, and Allah will do the rest."

The vizier did as he was told, and soon a wondrous miracle was wrought. The walnut-shells swelled out into the two halves of a broad lake, which was soon filled with clear water. The Sultan was greatly pleased to see that his favourite had done as he was told, and took him, from that day, more than ever into his favour. But the thirty-nine viziers were more jealous than ever; they contrived a new plot, and, going to the Sultan, said to him—

"O Sultan, thy favourite could build thee a house in the sky if thou wouldst but supply him with brick and mortar."

This idea also pleased the Sultan, and he commanded the poor vizier to find a workman and set him to build such a house, and have it completed before the new moon. But the vizier was once more plunged into despair at being commanded to perform such an impossible task.

"What makes thee so sad?" asked his betrothed, a beautiful girl who loved him as her own heart; and he told her of the plot. She did not look upon it so hopelessly as her lover did. "Go into the fields," she said, "and catch me a young lark."

The vizier did as she told him, and brought her the bird. She at once set about teaching it to say two words, *loi* and *gisht*, which are, in English, "brick" and "mortar."

Then she brought the bird to the vizier and said—

"Go to the Sultan and tell him you have fulfilled his commands, but first set the little bird at liberty beneath some high tree. Then take the Sultan and those wicked viziers to the spot and say—

"I have begun the house; it is so high up that you cannot see it. The workman is up there now, but he cannot get on for want of bricks and mortar."

So the vizier did as his betrothed had told him, and the Sultan and all his viziers were standing under the tree listening to the words of the favourite, when they heard a voice above them say, "*Loi! Gisht! Loi! Gisht!*"

"Bricks! Mortar! Bricks! Mortar!"

"O my Sultan," said the favourite, "thou seest I have done my part. Let not the workman be kept waiting any longer for material. I pray thee command these thirty-nine viziers to supply it."

The Sultan, more pleased than ever with his favourite, turned to the others and said—

"Do not let the workman call in vain; you have now your part to fulfil."

Pale with terror, the thirty-nine wicked men began to throw bricks into the air, but of course they all came down on their own heads, while the lark sang louder and louder: "*Loi! Gisht! Loi! Gisht!*" "Bricks! Mortar! Bricks! Mortar!"

"O useless and wicked viziers," cried the enraged Sultan, "it is you who fail to carry out my behests." And he straightway sent for an executioner, who cut the throat of every one of them.

Here is another:—

THE TIGER STORY.

There was once a beautiful stream that ran by the side of a great forest. On its banks there dwelt wild boars, foxes, deer, and many other animals, in happiness and safety, till one day there came a cruel tiger to disturb their peace. He carried off victim after victim, now that he had once discovered their retreat. At last these animals met together to see what plan they could devise for ridding the land of so terrible an enemy.

"It is no use going on like this," said the fox. "I have a plan to suggest. Instead of all of us passing every day of our lives in fear and trembling, let us take our fate into our own hands and decide for ourselves which of us shall be seized by the tiger in his daily rounds. Let us form ourselves into a long row, and the tiger will then seize the nearest of us every day, and the rest can live once more in comparative peace. To show you that this plan has not been suggested by me from motives of self-interest, I am quite willing to stand at the end of the row to begin with."

The other animals agreed to this, and settled to form themselves into a line on the following morning. Then the fox crept slyly away and told the tiger that he could supply him with a plump animal every day if he would only spare him (the fox) from the death to which he was subjecting his friends. The tiger consented to the arrangement, and the fox, having put himself at the head of the row the first day, disappeared as though he had been seized by the tiger. The animals stuck to the plan for some days, but soon got tired of being devoured, even in regular order, so they met again to consider. This time a very little animal, a jerboa, got up and said—

"The fox's plan has really done us no good at all; now we will try mine. Go and hide, every one of you, and I will settle it with the tiger."

To this the rest agreed, and when the tiger came he could find nothing for breakfast except the jerboa, who came up to him and said—

"O tiger, I will tell you the reason why there is no breakfast waiting for you to-day. Another tiger, finer and stronger than yourself, has come into the neighbourhood and eaten the animals that should have fallen to your lot."

"Where is he?" said the tiger, in a rage.

"I will lead you quietly to him," replied the jerboa, "and then you can spring at him and tear him to death."

So saying, he led the tiger down the bank of the river, and told him to bend over the water and look in. The tiger followed the counsel of the little jerboa, and, seeing his own angry visage reflected in the clear liquid, mistook it for that of his rival. In another moment he had sprung at it and disappeared into the water. Thus it was that the plan of the little jerboa succeeded.

Tigers, I may add, are still to be found in the neighbourhood of Namangan, one was wandering close to the town when we were there, and the chief of the district had provided a brave Sart[1] of his acquaintance with a gun to shoot it. The Sart, in his turn, had promised the skin to that gentleman's wife.

I shall close my chapter with one more tale,—

THE CRUEL STEPMOTHER.

Once upon a time there lived a Sart. His wife had died and left him with two children, a boy and a girl. The Sart married again. Very soon his second wife had a little girl of her own, whereupon she said to her husband, "Boil your son, and I will eat him."

The Sart was sorry, for he loved his son dearly.

[1] When a Kirgiz wishes to attack a tiger, he shuts himself up in his portable beehive hut and moves it steadily towards the tiger; when near enough, he shoots at him through a small opening.

However, his wife insisted, so he took the boy out into the garden, and collected a heap of firewood. Soon after he returned alone to his wife and said—

"Go out and look behind the barn; there you will find what you have asked for." His wife went and looked behind the barn; there, sure enough, she found the boy and the firewood all ready. She put the boy in a pot, boiled him, and ate him, throwing his bones into the back yard. The boy's sister found them there the next day, and burst into tears at the sorrowful sight. Weeping and crying, she gathered the bones together, put them in a bag, and hung them on the branch of a tree, where, wonderful to relate, they turned into a dove. Under the tree there passed a pedlar.

"Sing me a song, O dove," said he.

"Give me a needle," said the dove, "and I will sing."

The pedlar gave the dove a needle, and the dove sang a song.

"Sing again," said the pedlar.

"Give me another needle and I will sing again."

The pedlar gave the dove another needle, and was repaid by another song.

The boy's father now went to the mosque, and on his way he saw the dove sitting on the tree.

"Sing me a song, O dove," said he.

"First shut your eyes and open your mouth," said the dove.

But when the father shut his eyes and opened his mouth the dove dropped the needle down his throat, and killed him. Then the stepmother came out into the yard to bake bread, and she too noticed the dove.

"Sing to me," said she.

"First shut your eyes and open your mouth," replied the dove.

So the stepmother shut her eyes and opened her mouth, whereupon the dove dropped the other needle down her throat, and she died too. After that the dove flew down from the tree and turned into a beautiful little boy, to the great delight of his faithful sister.



CHAPTER XXI

SOME NATIVE INDUSTRIES

THE art of converting rags into paper came to Europe from China, by way of Samarkand and Morocco: the Spaniards learned it from the Moors. The date given by some writers as that of its invention in Samarkand—A.D. 751—is really that at which it was introduced there from China—the thirtieth year of the Hegira.[1] In the Escurial library there is said to be MSS. as old as the eleventh century of our era. Most of the paper used in native Turkestan to-day is manufactured in the town of Kokand. The Sarts mix their rags with water and stamp them to a pulp. Then they dilute the pulp with more water and shake it in a coarse matting sieve, after which they flatten it out between layers of felt, and polish it on one side by means of pressure upon a flat surface. Native writing-paper is thick and rather like parchment in appearance. It is glazed with a kind of gum extracted from a native plant.

[1] In his recently published account of the sand-buried ruins of Khotan, Stein writes: "It was a fact of archæological significance that among all the wealth of written documents not a single scrap of actual paper was found."

An industry in which the Sart particularly excels is that of making, and ornamenting with the chisel, copper and brass drinking-vessels, basins, plates and lamps, and gourd-pipes. Every bazaar has its street of coppersmiths, where you can see them at their work and hear the deafening noise of their hammers all going at once. The usual shape of a Sart drinking-vessel resembles that of an elegant coffee-pot, so tall and slender that it must be difficult to keep it clean. Some of the brass ones are overlaid with a thin coating of silver. As I have said elsewhere, the best work is put into those destined for sale in Moscow, so that it is no longer easy to pick them up on the spot, as of old, and the man in the booth has very few of his wares on show, perhaps only the particular vessel upon which he is at work. Wishing to purchase a *kungan*, or brass water-pot, in Kokand, where the best work is done, I stopped one day in front of a booth to which I had been directed, and asked the worker if he could not show me a larger assortment than those he had with him. Great was my surprise when he replied—

"My wife and children have several on hand, but they are doing their work at home."

"May I come and see them at it?" I asked.

"They will be very pleased to receive a visit from you," was his gracious reply.

The next day I went to the house indicated, and found the women and children sitting in a row on the

ground, each engaged, hammer and chisel in hand, upon some delicate bit of work. At one end of the row sat the white-haired grandmother ornamenting a large copper bowl, which rested on a piece of rough-hewn tree-trunk, that served her as a low table. The young wife sat in the middle with her rainbow-dressed children on either side of her. Some of them were chiselling brass-bound gourd-pipes, and one little girl was hammering at a *kungan*. I took an instantaneous photograph of this interesting group, but the colouring of the picture was half its charm.

"My wife's family are not metal-workers," said the husband, who came in before we left; "she learned the art after her marriage."

Bokhara is celebrated for its knives, which are as well made as any in Europe. I have read that the making of them to such perfection is a secret of the trade. Their shape is extremely elegant, and their metal is so good that the blades seldom need to be sharpened. Every Sart carries one in a leather case attached to his girdle. The handles are of wood or bone. I bought some of wood adorned with inlaid silver. Sometimes the handles are studded with turquoises, but in these cases a very high price is asked. The most valuable jewellery is that made of silver; the filigree work is heavier and coarser, but not less tasteful in its way, than that of European countries. At first sight many of the trinkets exposed for sale appear to sparkle with precious stones,

but on closer inspection one finds that, with the exception of coral beads and turquoises, the effect is produced entirely by the use of glass with coloured paper laid underneath. I stood for a long time before a booth in Andijan watching a silversmith finish off a delicate earring. He had screwed himself into such a posture as to be able to make use of the sole of his right boot as a bench on which to mould the red-hot trinket, after he had got it into that condition by holding it, with a long pair of tongs, over a brazier of glowing charcoal. His little apprentice, who happened to be his own son, a boy of about twelve years of age, was on his knees at his side, ready to take the tongs from his father's hand and dip the earring into a pail of cold water that stood on the other side of him. Before leaving the booth I asked the price of a bracelet that had attracted my attention, whereupon the man put it into the scales and weighed out its equivalent in small silver coins.

"That is its price," said he, taking the little pile of money out of the scales and counting it.

In Kokand we were taken to see a man whose art was that of covering European studs and scarf-pins with a mosaic of turquoise set in a honeycomb of silver, not unlike the inlaid woodwork of Tunbridge Wells. This branch of the industry dates back no further than to the advent of the Russians, and hardly comes under the category of native jewellery.

When Vambéry visited Bokhara in the year 1863 he found that the use of the Russian samovar had already been adopted by the natives, so it is not surprising that we found one or more of them in every tea-shop. The Sarts have not yet learned how to manufacture samovars, so Russia does a good business in that line. Those people who have a weakness for going over factories and seeing "just how the whole thing is done" would, I should think, derive a peculiar pleasure from wandering through the bazaars of Turkestan, for here, especially in Tashkent, they would have but to begin at the right end of the street to see the complete process of shoe-making, cap-making, coat-making, or any other manufacturing that might take their fancy or excite their curiosity. Let us take the art of shoe-making, for instance. Here we see a man engaged in cutting out. His immediate neighbour, who is busily sewing the pieces together, will come to him presently and purchase the leather on which he is now at work. The latter, in his turn, will dispose of his finished "uppers" to another whose business it is to add the soles, and so on. The leather used for Sart footgear is so elastic and soft that a boot is sure to fit if purchased a size larger than the foot for which it is intended. Thus all annoyance of "trying on" is avoided.

Carpets are manufactured in all parts of Turkestan, but the only kind of any durability or value produced

by the sedentary population is the deservedly famous "Bokharan carpet," which comes from Bokhara and Karshi. It is quite distinct from, and made more uniform in colour than, the still more celebrated product of Merv and Penjeh, which is, alas! so rapidly becoming extinct. To get an idea of the Bokharan carpet, the traveller should make a point of calling on some of the wealthy Israelites, whose spacious dwellings are furnished with the choicest that money can buy, or rather would buy, for to-day it is difficult to find even these elsewhere.

The cap bazaar at Samarkand is a wondrous sight, which never fails to attract the traveller. High walls are decked out with caps of every shade, in endless variety of shape and size. The salesman stands ready with a hooked pole six feet or more in length, and hooks down any particular one that may attract the customer's eye. But it is not only in the bazaar that caps may be bought. Just outside, I came upon a shrub about five feet high, upon every branch of which there hung a gorgeous cap. Beneath, and crossed-legged upon the ground, sat the owner, waiting for customers.

It was in Andijan that we were initiated into the art of cap-making. In one booth we found a man cutting out rounds of cloth, silk, and other material; in the next the stamping of patterns was going on: a youth had in his hand a mould which, after smearing yellow powder over it, he stamped

upon the cloth in four places, the round having been previously folded in four, and pressed, to show by its creases where the stamp should come. Bands to form the lower part of the caps were also being stamped. In a third booth the rounds of cloth, having been already purchased by women and embroidered at home, were being made into shape. The fourth booth contained caps ready for wear.



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CHAPTER XXII

TAMASHA

"Durch nichts bezeichnen die Menschen mehr ihren character als durch das was sie lächerlich finden."—GOETHE.

IN most of the towns a special *tamasha* was provided for our benefit. It consisted for the most part of instrumental music, singing, dancing, and acting, which usually took place on the ground floor of a tea-house, whilst we and other foreign spectators took our seats in the gallery above. Sart music is peculiar. I should never have recognised it as music but for the instruments by means of which it was produced. Most striking of all were the brass trumpets, nine feet in length, quite unlike any other musical instrument that I know of. The Russians call them the "trumpets of Jericho," and there is certainly a likeness between these and the trumpets of angels in mediæval pictures.[1] The Sart has to take many lessons before he can manage so unwieldy a tube, and when he can, the sound is like the roar of an angry bull. The *dutar* comes next in importance. It is a kind of guitar, used chiefly to accompany the human voice, and resembles those found in other

[1] See those on the carved doors of the Baptistery at Florence.

Eastern countries. Many of the Sart ladies play, and sing to, the *dutar* in their own houses, or dance while their husband, or brother, accompanies them upon it. I was glad to find that the women had at least this one *tamasha* available, for they are shut out from nearly every other kind of amusement. If, when we were visiting at a native house, our hostess considered herself anything of a musician, she was always ready to play or dance at our request. I cannot therefore endorse Skrine's remark that "music is unknown in the cheerless interior."

Other popular instruments are the flute, the clarionet, and the tambourine; the last is a special favourite. Sart singing is atrocious. It resembles the squalling of cats upon the roof, unless, as is sometimes the case, it sinks into a monotonous hum. The dancing of *batchas* is a favourite *tamasha*, but the Russian Government, fearing that they might help to excite the fanaticism of the people, has put a stop to their performances in Fergana. The Amir of Bokhara has a troupe of his own.

I remember a moonlight drive to the bazaar at Kokand, where a *tamasha* had been prepared for us. We were conducted to the balcony of a tea-house, where a table with *dasturkan* had been laid out, and a samovar hissed in readiness. Below, there was another samovar about the size of a small boiler, and round it stood a hundred teapots, which were soon filled, and distributed among the native

audience. The first item in the programme was a duet. Two men, each with a cup of tea in his right hand, sang a duet about the beauty of an imaginary lady. They sipped their tea, and sang, in turns. When their cups were empty the audience eagerly filled them, this friendly office taking the form of an "encore." The huge samovar was soon drained, and now a water-carrier stepped up and refilled it from his skin bottle, slung on his shoulder. Then a dwarf, the size of a boy of seven, but really twenty-eight years of age, came forward and entertained us by barking like a dog and crowing like a cock. The imitation was painfully good. He then went on to squeak like a puppy. One had only to shut one's eyes to be in a farmyard. Next came a dialogue between two actors; they both moved about on their knees. One imitated the singing of a lark, whilst the other was supposed to be a bird-catcher. The lark, caught at last by the beak, fluttered, gave its dying pipe—and expired. The next item on the programme was a wrestling-match between a Sart and a stick which had been dressed up in a turban and *calat*. The Sart cleverly put his own arm into the doll's sleeve and clutched at his own neck. The doll was then seen to pick up a tambourine from the floor and hit its opponent violently on the head. The two soon rolled on the floor together, struggling desperately. The stick, defeated at last, was taken out of its clothes and handed amongst the spectators.

Other actors were coming forward; but it was late, and we had had enough, so, after throwing a few coins to the performers, we sent for our droshkies and took our departure.

The story goes that early in the seventies, when the Amir of Bokhara sent an embassy to St. Petersburg, his Minister, pining for *tamasha*, went with his suite to the Royal Opera on a night when Adelina Patti happened to be singing there. The Minister was so charmed with her that he offered, the next day, to buy her for his harem! When the gentlemen of his suite were questioned as to what part of the opera had pleased them most, it was found that the tuning up of the violins had given them greater satisfaction than anything else. About eight years ago the Amir was seized with a desire to give a real European ball. He had often visited the Caucasus, and knew quite well how they managed such things in the gay town of Tiflis; but the difficulty in Bokhara was to get dancers. Native ladies could not of course be expected to leave the seclusion in which their lives were spent, even for a short fling upon the polished floor; and if they had come, they would never have succeeded in stepping the waltz. This is how the Amir got over the difficulty. He sent out invitations to all the Russians dwelling near or in his province. Every man, every woman, no matter their degree or station, was invited to the Amir's ball; and they all came,

from the political agent—who felt himself of more importance than any one else, the Czar alone excepted—down to the boy who washed bottles in the apothecary's shop. The Amir had ordered refreshment-tables to be laid out in one of his ancestral halls, another hall was cleared for the dancers. Russian musicians had been easily obtained, and the ball bade fair to be a great success.

The Amir peeped down upon the scene from behind the curtain of a balcony above. He thought it a very fine sight indeed, and quite proper it seemed to him that the Russians should provide him for once with so innocent a *tamasha.* It would be repulsive to the Asiatic mind were a great man to dance himself; it is the contemplation of other people's exertion that gives pleasure in the East. When one of the Amir's Ministers was invited to a ball at St. Petersburg he greatly enjoyed the spectacle, but was horrified when his host left his side to engage a partner for himself.

"No, no!" he cried; "I am quite satisfied with the amusement that your dancers have afforded me. Do not, I pray you, exert your own person for my benefit."

That his host could find pleasure in whisking round the room was an idea that had never entered the Minister's head. But to return to the Amir's ball. After the guests had danced for a considerable time they were asked to partake of refreshments.

All sorts of dishes, native and Russian, were piled upon the tables, which were covered with strips of shirting that had been torn into lengths and laid upon them, with no thought of hemmed ends, or any other kind of finish. After supper there was more dancing, and the Amir again looked down upon the gay revellers, enjoying himself immensely.

Now it is the custom in Bokhara that each invited guest shall receive a present from his host on leaving, so the Amir, as it was too late to distribute his gifts that night, though no beverage stronger than tea had been provided, sent a request to all the gentlemen that they would repair to the palace on the following day, and there receive the tokens of hospitality that he had ordered to be prepared for them. Each gentleman was presented with a *calat* or native robe of finest silk, and a loaf of sugar. The Amir was not there himself, the presents were distributed by one of his Ministers; but alas for the recipients of the sugar-loaves! this particular Minister being of a thrifty turn of mind—to put it as mildly as possible—had pocketed half the money given him for their purchase, and squared the account by presenting to each guest a sugar-loaf of half the stipulated size.

The guests felt themselves in an awkward predicament, for, though wild with the Minister for his avarice, they could not well look a gift-horse publicly in the mouth. One of them smarts to this day at

the thought of the injustice done to him and his friends on that occasion. It was he who told me the tale, and I believe every word of it, in spite of the fact that a certain young and aspiring diplomat—who hopes some day to rise high in the Czar's service—is under the impression that it is better for Russia, or rather for himself, that the Amir of Bokhara should not give European balls, and is therefore ready to tell you, with the greatest apparent candour, that "the Amir of Bokhara *never gave a ball in his life.*"

. . . . . .

When new to the country and its ways I put the question to a Russian friend, "What do the Sarts understand by the word *tamasha?*"

"You are *tamasha* to the Sarts," was the reply, "and they are *tamasha* to you." And it is true that wherever we went the people stood in rows to gaze at us, sometimes four or five deep; they would look, and look, and look, with the curiosity of children. They would stare just as a baby stares, and there was something quite pathetic in the very intensity of their gaze. They were pleased that we should take an interest in them, and we always found them glad to talk with us, and to answer any questions we cared to ask. Sometimes they too had inquiries to make.

"Is there any sea between Petersburg and London?" we were once asked by a man who had been as far as Moscow on business.

"Yes, one hour of sea."

"One hour? Oh, that's nothing!" he replied. "I shall come and see you some day," and then he carefully took down our address.

If he comes he will probably be the first Sart to visit England. Not long since I was describing to a Mohammedan gentleman from Tetuan some of the manners and customs of his co-religionists in Bokhara. He listened with interest, and, when I had finished, folded his hands upon his breast and, turning up his eyes to heaven, remarked gravely, "Bokhara is far off—who knows?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE KIRGIZ

THE Kirgiz spring from the same stock as the Uzbegs; or rather they are Uzbegs who have remained nomads. Russian ethnographers divide them into two classes, the dwellers in the mountains and the dwellers in the plains. The former are called Kara-Kirgiz, and the latter Kirgiz-Kaizaks. Wandering amongst the mountains and rarely coming in close contact with other races, the Kara-Kirgiz have naturally retained a greater purity of type than their cousins the Kirgiz-Kaizaks, whose life in the plains keeps them in comparatively close relationship with the sedentary population. You can hardly spend an hour in any Sart bazaar without seeing the stalwart forms of one or more Kirgiz women who, unveiled and seated on their sturdy little horses, have come to make purchases for their families at home. A Kirgiz house is nothing but an encampment of movable tents, made of withes and covered with felt. We drove out to one of these in the neighbourhood of Tashkent. The encampment was surrounded by a circular mud wall, enclosing about five acres of

barren ground. In the centre we found a crowd of camels, most of them kneeling, on a kind of dung-heap. There seemed to be more camels than anything else. I counted twenty tents, about three cows, and several groups of dirty-looking children. We entered most of the tents, or *yurta* as they are called, and what struck me more than anything else was the absolute bareness of these nomad dwellings. Besides the clothes they wore, the occupants seemed to possess hardly a rag. The whole furniture of one inhabited by a large family would consist of nothing but a samovar, one small trunk containing the household plate, a rug or two on the floor, and a roll of wadded quilts on which to sleep at night. Even this amount of furniture is more than they can take about with them on their summer wanderings, so they often bury part of it for a few months every year. That crowd of camels to which I have alluded appeared to represent the whole of their worldly goods. How large were the herds of horses and sheep which the men-folk were at that moment guarding on the neighbouring plains I am, of course, unable to say. The friend who had lent us his carriage for the drive, had also lent us his head coachman, who was himself a Kirgiz, and therefore felt quite at home among the camels and the *yurta*. He was dressed neatly in blue cloth, and wore a pair of bright yellow kid gloves. It was evident by his manner among his

compatriots that he was pleased to show what a Kirgiz could rise to. He smilingly refused to take the tip of half-a-crown that an English coachman would have considered as his due, and expressed with smiles and bows that the pleasure of driving us had been an ample reward for his pains. His master told us later on that the man considered himself "quite one of the family." He had one day come to him with a calm request for three hundred roubles (£30).

"What!" exclaimed his master, "that is half a year's wages!"

"Yes; but my brother's wife is dead and he wants to buy another."

If you ask a Kirgiz about his origin, he can tell you little more than the name of the particular *clan* to which he belongs. They have no chronicles and no monuments of their past; but there are a few vague traditions handed down from parents to children. An old man in Margelan told me that Noah had nine sons, one of whom settled in Fergana, and that a descendant of his had forty daughters, who were called in the Turki language *Kirk* (forty) and *Giz* (daughters), hence the name Kirgiz.

M. Nalivkin, in his history of Fergana, divides the Uzbegs into three classes: nomads, semi-nomads, and nomads who have become sedentary, that is to say, those who conquered the Tajiks, and

settling down among them, gradually adopted their manners, their customs, and their agricultural pursuits. Those who remained nomads considered themselves vastly superior to the degenerate brethren, and were ready to make them feel their superiority whenever they could, by making raids upon their fields, and stealing anything they could lay hands on. When, however, the necessities of life forced the nomads or Kirgiz to come to their bazaars, the Sarts took care to charge them exorbitant prices for everything they bought. Whereupon the Kirgiz, accustomed from their childhood to war and rapine, would swoop down upon the Sart granaries in the autumn, and carry off the newly thrashed grain, which many an industrious Sart had sown and harvested with the sweat of his brow. The natural result of this was, that the Sarts began to look upon the Kirgiz as brigands, assassins, and everything that was bad, while the Kirgiz came to the conclusion that the Sarts, having lost all their manly qualities since they had taken to driving carts and digging the fields, were no longer capable of resisting their incursions. Nothing succeeds like success. The Sarts began to tremble more and more before the inroads of the Kirgiz, and the latter grew more and more audacious. At last the Sarts took to defending themselves with firearms, and this gave them an advantage over the nomads who had no such weapons, and they were

able to enjoy a little respite. But the Sarts at last hit upon a still better kind of revenge. They began gradually to buy up all the lands of the Kirgiz, who were quite willing to part with them for a mere song, for, being too proud to cultivate them themselves, they got very little profit out of them, and did not realise their value. One man parted with several acres of land for a glass of his favourite drink, *buza*, a kind of beer made of millet. Another sold a plot of land for a horse; twenty years later its value was seven hundred roubles. Thus the Kirgiz got pushed off the valleys little by little, till at last they possessed but very little cultivable ground. The third class, the semi-nomads, was that of the Kipchaks and the Karakalpaks, who joined the occupation of cattle-breeding to that of agriculture. They remained faithful to the principles of their ancestors; their political and administrative unity remained in the tribe rather than in the clan. They did not, like the Kirgiz, cease to think of themselves as tribes, and distinguish themselves only as subdivisions of tribes, that is, as clans. Consequently their traditions were much better preserved; they had much more power, through their unity, than the Kirgiz who had split up into clans. For a further account of the Kipchaks and the Karakalpaks and of the way in which these people used their power, I would refer my reader to M. Nalivkin's interesting work. I will

simply add that, finally, it was the loss of their unity which proved their ruin. The ambitions of one man was what eventually caused their fall. The word Uzbeg means "your own master"; *Uz* (self) and *Beg* (master).

The Kirgiz are obliged to move their herds from the plains to the surrounding hills at the approach of summer, for the grass dries up and there is no longer sufficient water for their needs. Those in the vicinity of Sart towns are just as much the owners of the spots in which they settle for the winter, as if they dwelt there all the year round. In this respect they resemble the Turkomans of Merv. The steppe over which the Kirgiz wander reaches from the Amu Daria to the confines of Siberia. In my book "A Ribbon of Iron" I have given a short account of a visit to those in the vicinity of Omsk on the Siberian railway. The Kirgiz are steadily decreasing in numbers. Schwarz, quoting the memoirs of Sultan Babar, tells us that one of these Khans was able to bring an army of three hundred thousand men into the field. The Kirgiz of to-day abhor the idea of a census; they are quite superstitious about letting the Russians count them, so that it is difficult to get at their numbers.

Among these people great respect is shown to old men; and women, though they have to work hard, have a far more important position in the

household than Sart women. A reason assigned for their custom of polygamy is that one wife would find it so hard to put up a *yurta* all alone. Neither the Sarts nor the Kirgiz have servants. A Kirgiz husband would never dream of assisting his wife in her household duties. It would be quite improper. A Kirgiz of distinction will never touch work of any kind. The women not only put up the *yurtas*, but they make the felt which covers them. They also make very good carpets. Their favourite drink is *kumys*, or fermented mare's milk; it froths up like ginger-beer when you uncork it.

The Kirgiz are followers of Islam; some writers affirm that the Russians, finding them without any religion at all, introduced Mohammedanism as the faith most likely to suit them. Others say that they were Mohammedans before, and that the Russians only encouraged them. One thing, however, is clear, they are the least fanatical of all the Prophet's followers. This may arise from the fact that they can neither read nor write, nor worship in a mosque except when they come into the towns. In spite of all these disadvantages, their private life is infinitely more moral than that of the fanatical Sarts. Town life has a corrupting influence in Central Asia as elsewhere. The Kirgiz are an honest people. The Russian authorities respect the word of a Kirgiz magistrate. If a theft is

discovered, the perpetrator of it is severely punished. The herds of horses which the Kirgiz let out to graze far and wide, provide these people literally with food and drink; for, in addition to the fact that they consume an enormous amount of *kumys*, I must add that no meat is to them so great a delicacy as horseflesh. A Sart would never touch it. The Kirgiz horse has been described as small, strong, and ugly. It carries its head low, a result of continual grazing in spots where the grass is very short; and it is not quite so swift as the Turkoman breed.

The fat-tail sheep, which provide the Sarts with their excellent mutton, are supplied to the markets by the Kirgiz. I never saw a respectable-looking cow during my stay in the country; but my Russian friends informed me that there were plenty of fine yaks in the mountains, and that the Kirgiz used them both for riding and as beasts of burden. They look very fierce with their great horns and long, shaggy black hair, but in reality they are quite tame, and the little Russian boys delight to ride on them, when they go to the hills for their summer holidays. All the animals grow thin in winter, because there is so little food for them. When it is about time for the fresh herbage to appear, the Kirgiz set fire to the stubble that has remained from the previous year, in order to clear the ground for the new grass. They keep their thrashed grain

in underground storehouses, just as the Moors do, but it is only the poorest that engage in agriculture. Numbers of them make a living by supplying the Russians with charcoal for their samovars.

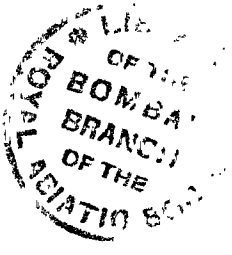
The reason assigned for the fact that the Kirgiz always march their animals in separate herds is that they require different kinds of food; while the horse requires grass, the camel must be led where it can find the so-called "camel plant," which grows so plentifully in the sandy plains and deserts. It is not uncommon to find a whole family riding into town on one horse—father, mother, and children, one behind the other. Like the Turkomans, the Kirgiz are splendid riders. Their stirrups are very short and wide, and they sit so loosely that they can spring to the ground more easily than a European could rise from his chair; hence they are never thrown, or dragged along the ground, or crushed against a wall, as is too often the case with us. The horses go unshod, and no spurs are used. Ever since the Russians began to settle in Tashkent, thousands of Kirgiz have lived by transporting, across their vast steppe, household furniture and every article that the Russian settlers needed to bring from Russia. The new railway will probably take from them this means of subsistence, and force many of them to take up agriculture in place of it.

The Kirgiz, like his horse, can sustain life for

many days without food. Schwarz relates a story to the effect that a Kirgiz courier, who had been sent with a telegram from Kokand to Vernie in the winter of 1880–1881, was snowed up on his way over the mountains. There was nothing for it but to wait quietly till the snow melted. He remained in one spot for forty-two days (?), and in order to still the pangs of hunger ate up all his clothes except his fur cap, and would have swallowed the telegram too had he not feared, as he afterwards said, that he would be held responsible for its safety. A relief party sent out to find him, brought him, in a famished condition, to the nearest *yurta*, where he ate so much food at one sitting that he died of indigestion two days later.

PART II

REMINISCENCES



CHAPTER I

TASHKENT AND SAMARKAND

RUSSIAN historians divide the history of Tashkent into eight distinct periods, and tell us that its earliest name was Shash. Then in some way or other Shash got changed into Tash, which signifies "a stone," and the name appeared in Russian books of the fifteenth century as Tashkur. According to a local guide-book published in Tashkent in the autumn of 1901, the Russian and native towns combined could then boast of 156,414 inhabitants, 25,000 or whom were Russians. There are 163 kilometres of street; when General Kaufmann laid out the wide streets of the Russian town he had an eye to the future, for he took in as much ground as if he were building a second Paris. Although its comparatively small European population, civil and military combined, seems at present to roll about in it like "one pill in a pill-box," another generation will be able to tell a different tale. In 1906 Tashkent will, if all goes well, be brought within three days' journey of Moscow, by means of the railway from Orenburg now under construction.

Others have already described its public buildings, its clubs, and its churches; I will simply add that it has now a library of 24,000 books, an Archæological Society, a museum and a winter theatre, three banks, and besides its boys' and girls' schools, a training college for male teachers, and a military academy.

It was on a cold and cheerless winter's day that we stepped from the luxuriously fitted-up governor's carriage in which we had spent so many pleasant hours, on to the platform of the Tashkent railway station. As we drove to our destination, the double rows of gaunt and leafless poplars on either side of the unpaved streets, as wide as the Champs Elysées, looked like an endless array of gigantic garden-brooms with their bristles in the air. We seemed to be driving through ploughed fields after a night of heavy rain. The low bungalow-like houses were so far apart that they did not appear to be in streets at all, but rather popped down in a waste of no man's land. Had they been built of logs, I should have believed myself in some corner of Siberia, but as it was they were all of white stone, and not badly built either when you came to look at them. Their plate-glass windows had come on camel-back from Russia, over miles and miles of desert.

Such a thing as an hotel does not even yet exist in Turkestan; for travellers, other than commercial, are not expected, and business men put up in

chambres garnis, as we were obliged to do. New arrivals, coming to stay, are received as guests in the houses of people to whom they have brought introductions, official or otherwise, from the home country, until they can settle down in houses of their own. They in their turn are ready to show a similar kindness to others. Russian hospitality is deservedly proverbial. I shiver to think how we should have fared had we not found it so. The food we paid for was always atrociously cooked, and invariably stuck fast to our plates in cold mutton fat before we had eaten two mouthfuls. But happily for us, we rarely lunched or dined at home, so many were the kind invitations we received, not only in Tashkent but in every Russian town.

The Russian streets, as I have said, were wide and empty, but we found the native ones narrow and full, and there was plenty to see and learn as we strolled in the matting-covered bazaar with its 4500 booths, or visited the homes of rich and poor in turn. We found mounted Russian policemen keeping order at the crossings, and thus preventing the collisions that would have otherwise been unavoidable between strings of camels, native carts, and Russian droshkies; but the thing that impressed us most, both in the Old Tashkent and the New, was the extraordinary depth of the liquid mud which made it out of the question to think of crossing any street on foot.

It was still midwinter when we retraced our steps to Samarkand, a distance of 200 miles. This was not my first visit to the "centre of the globe," as the Persian proverb has it. I had seen Samarkand before, adorned in all its summer beauty, and could picture its scattered houses peeping out from amongst green foliage, as luxuriant as that of a forest glade. The long avenue of acacia-trees leading from the station to the Russian town was leafless now, but the scene was gay with brilliantly robed and turbaned natives, many of them trotting along on the lively little donkeys for which Samarkand is famed. It is here that the eye feasts on colour. It is here that the Sart appears as a butterfly. In Bokhara he has not room to spread his rainbow wings, and in all the other towns where Uzbeg influence prevails he is a sombre moth by comparison.

On revisiting the world-famed ruins that still remind us of Tamerlane and his splendour, I was glad to find them more carefully guarded than formerly. Native custodians are now on the watch against barbaric tourists and professors with hammers. There are actually notices up in English to the effect that no damage is to be done. The exquisitely carved wooden door of Tamerlane's tomb has been transported to the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg, and perhaps that is as well. I felt myself a privileged mortal when I looked once

more upon the Gur Emir or grave of the commander, as the Sarts call it. As we approached, the imposing cupola rose before us above the trees at the end of the long avenue that inclines upward to its entrance, and the mosaic tilework of palest blue-green, with which it is still covered in patches, shone in the morning sunlight. We entered by the quaint portico which is all that remains of what was once the entrance both to the tomb and to the medresse at its side. The mosaic over the archway has remained almost intact, and the inscription in white Arabic letters on an azure background, which forms the centre of the design, has been left untouched by time: "Mohammed the son of Mahmoud from Isfahan was the architect."

Tamerlane superintended the building of his own tomb. The workmen were the prisoners he had brought with him from India, China, and Persia. We passed under the archway, and standing in a courtyard which was at one time joined to the tomb by the buildings of the medresse, looked up at the melon-shaped cupola, ornamented at its base with verses from the Koran, in characters so large that the "Alif" measured ten feet if not more. I inquired how high it was.

"Its height is unknown," replied my companion, a Persian and Arabic scholar, who had studied all the available literature upon the subject. "It has never been thought of. When you look up inside,"

he continued, "you will not think it nearly so high, for there are two cupolas, one inside the other, and the inner one is considerably lower than the other."

And such indeed was the case. Over the door of the side entrance is written in white letters, again on a blue background, an inscription which my friend translated as: "Here is buried Timur Kuragan."

The word *Kuragan* signifies that he was allied by marriage to a royal princess. The floor of the antechamber was covered with pieces of coarse matting. When the Sarts who accompanied us had taken off their shoes, we entered the chamber beneath the cupola, in the centre of which, enclosed by a beautifully sculptured marble railing about two feet in height, lay the flat tombstones in honour of Tamerlane, his confessor, and several members of this family. The actual graves are in a vault below. We visited them afterwards, descending a winding stair of seven stone steps, which was illumined for our benefit by our Sart companions, each of whom carried a piece of lighted candle.

There, in front of our eyes, lay the renowned block of shining jasper, in two pieces. It was a very dark green, almost black, in colour, and covered all over with Arabic writing. There is a legend that it was broken by some robbers when they tried to carry it away.

"How many camels," said my friend as we looked

at it, "must have perished in the transport of that unique mass of nephrite! It was brought from the Altai mountains, but the spot and the year are unknown."

A well-known Russian geologist, M. Mushvetoff, is of the opinion that it was brought from the Kuan Sun Mountains, and is the only one of its kind. A translation of the inscription, published in 1901, by M. Medinsky, son of the present governor of Samarkand, is as follows: "This is the tomb of the great Sultan, of the great and merciful monarch, Amir Timur Kuragan, son of the Amir Taragaz" (and here comes a genealogy of nine generations). "Ghengis Khan came from the same stock as the ancestors of this sultan worthy of praise, buried in this sacred and superb tomb. Let all know that the mother of one of the ancestors of Tamerlane, named Alankociva, known far and wide for her chastity and spotless virtue, was once visited by a *wolf* in the form of a man, who persuaded her that he was a descendant of the sovereign of the Faithful, Ali, son of Abru Talib, and that Allah had destined him to be her husband. She consented to their union, and when her son was born her word, with regard to his parentage, was received as pure truth. Her worthy descendants conquered the world, and they will possess it for ever."

"An important and interesting discovery has been made during the last few months with regard to this

inscription," said my companion. "We have now proved that the word *wolf* is incorrect, and that the letters signify *a ray of sunshine.* The mistake was owing to the ravages of time upon the first letter of the word. The Arabic equivalent for B was formerly read; we now read N. It is certainly much more probable that Tamerlane should have traced his origin to the sun than to a wolf."[1]

The other tombstones were of rough unpolished marble like those in the native burial-grounds of the present day. Marble is as plentiful in Samarkand as it is in some parts of Italy, but though one sees so much of it, it is seldom polished. The most prominent tomb after that of Tamerlane is that of a mullah whom Tamerlane brought with him from Afghanistan, because he attributed his successes to the prayers of this holy man, and wished him to continue his intercessions on his behalf. At the head of the mullah's tomb are two poles bearing flags and horsehair tails, the usual emblems used to mark the spot where a saint has been laid to rest. The walls of the chamber are decorated with a dado of sculptured and polished sardonyx, while the four arched recesses are decorated with stalactite work of crumbling stucco, somewhat resembling that of the Alhambra.

The tombs of Tamerlane's relatives lie in two

[1] The Nogai Tatárs have a tradition that Ghengis Khan was born among them of a virgin by a sunbeam. See the travels of Haxthausen, published in 1856.

rows, with the remains of a mosaic-covered passage of fairy-like beauty between them, which leads to the tomb of *Shah Zindah*, or the Living King, over which stands a mosque called after him. The Sarts firmly believe that he is only asleep, and that he will one day rise up and reconquer the world for Mohammed. On the handsome flight of steps by which this beautiful ruin is approached there are always to be found a number of sedate and venerable mullahs, who have a hereditary right to haunt the holy precincts. When we appeared upon the scene, one of them rose with dignity and went before us with a rosary in his hand. It was he who pointed out to us the *Chillah Hanah*,[1] or Hole of Forty Days, which I have described elsewhere. He also told me that Shah Zindah was one of the Arab chiefs who conquered the country long before the time of Tamerlane; he was a first cousin of Mohammed. We were then taken into the room in front of the tomb, which is said to be the most ancient room in Samarkand. It was built fifty-two years after the flight of Mohammed. Close outside the mosque are some remains of the ancient wall built by Alexander. The old cemetery in its vicinity is a happy hunting-ground for curio-seekers, especially after rain has fallen. Children come here to look for Greek coins. It is here that the tomb of Alexander's friend Clitus is supposed to be; but as the Sarts have a way of burying their

[1] See Chap. III. Part I.

dead one upon another, there is no knowing how many deep they may not lie above that hero. Before leaving Shah Zindah I asked the mullah with the rosary how many steps there were leading up to it, to which he replied:—

"I have often tried to count them, but the number comes different every time!"

On coming away, my companion, the Oriental scholar, explained to me that the figure of a fish which I had noticed on several of the tombs was cut in the stone as a symbol of silence.

We next visited the mosque of Bibi Kanim, the Chinese wife of Tamerlane. It is magnificent still, though much of it has fallen during the last three or four years. I fear it would be the first to suffer should there be another earthquake, for there are many fresh cracks in its tottering walls. The medresse which was once connected with it has already crumbled and fallen, only a wall or two now standing. The mosque formerly stood in a court 300 feet long and 250 feet broad, paved throughout with marble. From the historian Abu Tagir Khogi we learn that Tamerlane brought two hundred stone-masons from Persia and India besides five hundred artists, and that princes of the blood superintended the building, besides which Tamerlane was constantly present in person to encourage the workers.

In the Russian citadel is the *koktash*, or blue stone, on which the Amirs of Bokhara were regu-



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MEDRESSE SHIR DAR

Forming one side of the Rigistan or Great Square at Samarkand

larly crowned, so to speak, for there was no crown, until the Russians took it from them. The ceremony took place in this manner: A large piece of white felt was spread upon the ground, and on this the new Amir had to take his seat. Then four of the principal dignitaries of the Khanate lifted the cloth by its four corners, and, raising it high in the air, placed it upon the sacred stone.

The *Rigistan*, or public square, is formed by three fine medresses—the *Shir Dar*, or Lion Gods; the *Tilla-Karri*, or golden-dressed; and the *Ulug Beg*, named after the celebrated astronomer of that name, a grandson of Tamerlane.[1] He must have been a man of some character, for he did not hesitate to punish his own son for taking the lead in an insurrection against him, by cutting off his head and exhibiting it to the people from the walls of this medresse. The ruins of his observatory on a hill outside the town are still to be seen. Great is the esteem in which his medical skill is still held in Bokhara. I do not think I should recognise the *Registan* if I saw it empty. Every time we looked in, it was swarming with brightly-robed idlers; and the walls of its medresses were always fringed with the gleaming turbans of Sarts, who seemed to have nothing in the world to do but enjoy the spectacle of the crowd below.

It will be interesting to see what place Samarkand

[1] See note, p. 171.

eventually takes among the Russian towns of Turkestan. At present it is in a sleepy state, and unless it bestirs itself, it will soon be left behind in the race, with nothing to boast of but its ruins and its historical past. So long as the railway went no further, there was every reason to hope that it would bring new life to the ancient capital of Tamerlane. Travellers by rail were forced to alight there and continue their journey by tarantass. Six years ago I greatly enjoyed watching whole families, who had been my fellow-passengers across the Caspian, packing themselves, father, mother, babies, servants and all, into the huge barrel on wheels that was to convey them by slow stages to Tashkent. Now the train only stops twenty minutes in the station, and no one who is not bound for Samarkand ever dreams of alighting. Energetic business men who had deliberately chosen Samarkand as their centre, and even built themselves houses there, are now seriously meditating a move to Tashkent or Kokand, as more suitable places in which to make a fortune. It was only in 1899 that a train entered Kokand for the first time, yet many fortune-seekers from the old country have already chosen that bustling and lively little town in preference to sleepy Samarkand. I am not at all inclined to think that this state of things was the wish of the Russian Government. The beautifully laid out pleasure-gardens, the handsome church, and the absolutely palatial splendour

of the new Russo-Chinese bank, all tell a different tale. But Russia must do more if she wishes to save the prestige of this beautiful town. She must put a man with the energies of a Kuropatkin there, if only for a year or two.

In the autumn of 1898 I read in the English papers that Samarkand had been attacked by plague, but I found on making inquiries on the spot in 1901 that the real facts of the case were as follows. Near the lake of Iskander, or Alexander, there is a small mountain village called Anzob, the inhabitants of which are said to be direct descendants of some of the Greek soldiers who accompanied Alexander the Great on his conquering journey from Macedon to Sogdiana. It was in this village that a terrible and unknown disease broke out in 1898. Every precaution was taken by the Russians to prevent its spreading to Samarkand, and happily it did not spread. Anzob is so situated that to reach it from Samarkand one must ride for a considerable distance along a dangerous and circuitous path which skirts the side of a steep mountain, at the foot of which lies the lake. The Russian lady doctors who attended the women of Anzob got so accustomed, through their constant journeys thither, to the difficulties of the route that they actually began to take it at a canter! But when this reached the ears of the authorities it was put a stop to, as being an unnecessary risk of human life.

Though Samarkand is well watered by its canals from the Zarafshan, it has no water-works, and every Russian household has to depend for its supply on native water-carriers, and the water has always to be boiled, for, although in itself it is pure enough, there is no knowing what may be the state of the vessels in which it is brought.

CHAPTER II

KOKAND, CHYUST, AND NAMANGAN

KOKAND, in the Khanate of that name, was formerly the chief town of Fergana. The word is derived from *Ko* = a wild boar, and *Kand* = a town, and means "the town of the wild boars." Fergana is perhaps the most fertile province in the whole of Central Asia, and its inhabitants are in consequence richer if not happier than their neighbours. Kokand was enjoying a spell of sharp, cold weather when we arrived, and the natives were walking about in thickly wadded cotton robes, with sleeves a foot longer than their arms, which completely hid their hands and flapped with every movement like the fins of a fish.

The Sart town contains several fine medresses,[1] the largest of which, Medresse *Jammi*, accommodates fifteen hundred pupils. The total number of medresses is fifty-six, and there are between five and six hundred mosques. We visited the family tombs of Kudoyar, the last Khan of Kokand. They are in a piece of ground that the Russians have turned into a park. Kudoyar is not buried there;

[1] See Chap. IX.

he died in Mecca, to which town he fled after distributing his many wives among the most faithful of his followers. Kokand used to have its own coinage. The Russian Government has bought up all the native money it could find, but some of the old people still hoard it in their houses. Just before we arrived a poor old man was robbed of all his hidden wealth, the worth of which in English money was £20. The gold coin was called a *tilla*, and the people still count in *tillas*. The silver coins are of unadulterated metal, and are bought up by the Government as pure silver.

The palace of the Khans looks far better in a photograph than it does in reality. Its mosaic front is but a miserable imitation of the beautiful art which Tamerlane brought to such perfection in Samarkand. The Russians now use the palace as a church. They would have built an edifice of their own, but for the difficulty and expense of draining the plot of ground that has long been set apart for the purpose.

It was in Kokand that we witnessed the great religious service with which Ramazan was brought to a close. Our friend the chief of the police was bound to be on the spot to keep order, and he kindly called for us, on his way to the principal mosque, at the early hour of 7 A.M. The streets were full of people hastening to the festival, with their goloshes in their hands to keep them clean. A boy with

two live fowls under one arm was standing at the entrance, and a cart loaded with melons had drawn up close by. When we arrived the square in front of the mosque was already crowded, as well as the inside of the building. Every inch of standing place upon the surrounding walls was thick with worshippers. Each man had either a prayer-carpet under his arm or an embroidered handkerchief round his waist to be used as such, and, when the call for prayer was heard from the minaret in the centre of the square, the whole throng spread their carpets or girdles and prostrated themselves in perfect order. In answer to my inquiries as to how many people there were present, the chief of police replied that there were quite five thousand worshippers within the precincts, and not less than ten thousand in the street outside. It was truly a magnificent spectacle. At the close of the service a solemn prayer was offered for the Emperor of Russia. Then there was a general shaking of hands and the crowd began to disperse. On the roof of a house near the entrance sat a group of Sart musicians, each armed with a gigantic "trumpet of Jericho." The blasts they blew from these terrific tubes were loud, if not agreeable.

The Russian town of Kokand consists of two long streets, the Rosenbach and the Skobeleff. These are already crowded with houses, and I trust, for the sake of the colonists, that it will

not be long before new streets are added. In 1902 the Sart town had a population of eighty thousand, and the Russian three thousand. The latter contains a good sprinkling of well-paid representatives of some of the great business houses of Moscow. These keep the civil element in a flourishing condition, with the result that there is a pleasant feeling of commercial prosperity in the air; a feeling which is sadly lacking in some of the other towns. The administration is military. Considering the civil needs of the town, this fact strikes the traveller as slightly incongruous; but Rome was not built in a day, and things will right themselves in time.

There is as yet no railway to Namangan, so we had to order a tarantass to take us thither. Two horses were harnessed to the vehicle, and a third ran at the side with a loose rein. It was what the Russians call a *troika*. We packed ourselves in at 7.30 A.M., with provisions for lunch and a small valise. We had, of course, our rugs and our fur cloaks, but these, our friends had assured us, would not be sufficient to keep out the cold, so we wisely accepted the loan of two gentlemen's coats made of black sheepskin, into which we and our English wraps disappeared so completely that only the tops of our heads were visible. For knowing how to keep warm in freezing weather, there is no one like a Russian. We were in that

tarantass for twelve hours, and were all the time as warm as if we had been sitting by a roasting fire. The sun shone brightly all day, but a white frost covered the ground, which was very hard in consequence. An inch of ice lay on the water in the canals. Our unclipped horses had long, curling hair, and long tails knotted up with string. The chief of police rode with us to the outskirts of the town and then turned back, leaving a mounted Cossack to ride in front and clear the way. After the Cossack had preceded us in state for half-an-hour he handed us over to the care of a mounted Sart policeman, who rode ahead for the rest of the journey, clearing all and sundry out of our way with a long whip which he brandished in the air as if it were a scimitar. On and on we drove, passing now one village now another. All were built entirely of mud, with never a door or window to be seen. The post-road was lined with double rows of leafless willow-trees, in the branches of which were stacked great loads of maize stalks. Between the rows of willows were canals. Just as we got to the first post-house something went wrong with one of our wheels, so we halted to get it mended, as well as to rest the horses. Villagers old and young squatted down on the frosty ground on every side of us and chatted gaily with our driver. With the chocolate-coloured walls of the mud houses as a background, these people made

a wonderful picture in their robes of every hue. One man had on a garment of brightest apple-green and a white turban, another sported a robe of yellow and red stripes. Every one of the villagers had high leather boots. Over our heads hovered hundreds of magpies, floating in circles and occasionally settling in swarms on the tops of the leafless trees. On we went again, past more villages and high mud walls surrounding private vineyards. When you pass through villages in England it is the women who come out, with their little ones in their arms, to have a look at the strangers. In Turkestan it is the men, and they hold their children quite as tenderly as any woman could. At the next post-house we ordered a samovar, made some tea, and ate our lunch. When we got once more into our tarantass, we found to our dismay that one of our rugs had disappeared. We never saw it again. The great event of the journey from Kokand to Namangan is the crossing of the river Syr Daria (the Jaxartes of the ancients). There is no such thing as a bridge in those parts. When we reached the bank we found a crowd of natives waiting to cross.

The horses were now taken from our tarantass and led on to the front of the raft on which we were to be floated over to the other side. There were a number of other horses there already, and some of these began to kick and show fight as the

men pushed them all together to leave as much space as possible for the vehicles. We got out, and our tarantass was then pulled on to the raft, and as many other carts were crowded in behind it as the raft would hold. Then we were floated across. Happily the day was calm and the water quiet. When there is a storm it is impossible to get the raft across. Once on the other side, we soon had our horses in again, and were off at a brisk pace across a stony waste of desert land that lay between the river and our next halting-place—the town of Chyust.

Chyust is a Sart town with a population of sixteen thousand. Here the Tajik element predominates. It has not a Russian town of the same name attached to it like all the others, but there are already three European houses standing close together in a newly-made street. One of these is occupied by the chief of the district. That gentleman has a French governess for his children, and from the young lady I heard that out of twenty-five seeking situations she was the only one who had had the courage to accept a post so far from home, in a town that nobody had ever heard of. I may add that we were the first Englishwomen to arrive there, and as yet neither Chyust nor Namangan has ever seen an Englishman, nor indeed an American, unless he has appeared on the scene since February 1902.

I shall always remember with pleasure the hours

we spent at Chyust, and the kind hospitality of our Russian host and hostess. The next morning I wandered round the town, note-book in hand, and greatly impressed the natives by so doing. It evidently pleased them to find that they and their homes were worth writing about. The largest mosque is three hundred and fifty years old. The entrance to this, and indeed the entrance to each of the mosques, was barred by a thick wooden rail apparently as old as the doorway, and about two feet and a half from the ground. It was not easy for a lady with long skirts to clamber over these, and I could see that the mosques of Chyust, at any rate, were only intended for male worshippers. How the crowd of boys that followed me enjoyed watching my efforts to leap gracefully over the barriers! But it was worth trying, if only to see their merry faces, and prove that the Sart is not devoid of humour, whatever may be his other characteristics.

Our journey from Chyust to Namangan lay through another wide expanse of stony ground, with here and there a large village, each of which was surrounded by vineyards as before, and then again by high mud walls, over which we could only just see the tops of the vines. The villagers continued to take a lazy interest in us as we passed, but there was not a single case of begging. Where in Europe, I should like to ask, could we drive through a dozen villages and say as much? Until quite

recently a Sart woman in these parts would scream if she met a Russian in the street, no matter how closely her impenetrable veil might be drawn over her charming features. It seems that such treatment was unpleasing to the Russians, for they took strong measures to stop this greeting (if I may make a Scotch pun). Every time a woman screamed her husband had to pay a fine. The remedy proved most effectual.

We reached Namangan late in the evening, but it was not too dark to see the rows of poplar-trees that lined streets as wide as those of Tashkent. The native town here is in a particularly prosperous condition. Many poor Sarts have become rich since the introduction of American cotton. In contrast to Chyust, this town is almost purely Uzbeg. The Mohammedan law that you must pay your debts is strictly kept; the people are so honest that Russians will trust them with large sums of money without any security, but at the same time they are inclined to be miserly, and would take care to get a farthing from you if you owed it them. It is sad that the result of keeping of Mohammedan laws is not always so favourable. The number of murders would probably be much smaller had not that prophet forbidden *post-mortem* examinations.

Land in Namangan has five times the agricultural value that it has in Kokand. I speak, of course, of land watered by canals. The rest is useless desert, for no private individual could afford to reclaim it.

The word Namangan is a Persian word meaning "salt town." All the salt used in Fergana comes from here. Nearly everybody in the Russian town is connected with the growing, or cleaning, or exporting of cotton. The present chief of the district has done much to improve both the Russian and the native towns. He has had wooden lamps placed at regular intervals along the streets, and, in order that the posts may not rot, he has invented the ingenious plan of encasing them in iron pipes.

The new prison is a fine building, with large and airy rooms (they can hardly be called cells) all whitewashed and spotlessly clean; they are used for Russians and natives alike. All the work of the prison is done by native prisoners. Even the head cook is a Sart. We found four Sart women in one of the rooms. One had murdered her husband from jealousy, another had helped to murder some one else's husband. There is also a smaller prison for those convicted of slight offences. These are taken out to work in the streets all day. Many a Sart will deliberately steal something in the autumn, in order that he may have a comfortable place to sleep in during the winter months, in which the weather is usually as cold as it is in the county of Middlesex, if not colder. In the centre of the Russian pleasure-grounds there is a little piece of water where skating can be indulged in during the month of January. Namangan is situated on the right bank of a small

river that flows down from the neighbouring mountains. It overflows its banks every now and then in spring, and it is of the utmost importance to the inhabitants that they should know in time when to open their side canals, and secure the extra water, which would otherwise do terrible damage, as they know from past experience. Water, like fire, is a dangerous master. During several months of the year men with their horses ready are stationed day and night at regular intervals along the course of the river to watch, and pass on the news directly its floods begin to swell.

It was to Namangan that a party of monks journeyed all the way from Syria in the year 1901, that they might search for certain Christian graves (of Nestorian Christians) which, according to their sacred books, must lie somewhere near that town. They succeeded in finding several graves, but when they started to excavate, the Sarts rose to a man and declared that the saints who rested there were pious followers of the Prophet, and must on no account be disturbed.

"Let us at least dig them up," pleaded the monks, "and see which way their bodies have been laid, for then we shall have convincing proof."

But the Sarts were obdurate, and the monks turned sorrowfully homeward, their mission unfulfilled. They were missionaries to the dead, it is true, but since the time of Wolff there has been no

avowedly Christian mission to the living in Russian Central Asia.

An interesting discovery has recently been made in the neighbourhood, of several ancient naphtha wells. The wood in them is so hard that no drill can pierce it, and experts say that this is the effect of petroleum coming in contact with it for many centuries. They suppose the wells to have been built by Alexander's followers.

There is as yet no theatre in Russian Namangan, but in spite of this, the great event during our stay there was the arrival of a theatrical company from Russia. A room in the Military Club was fitted up for their use, and we were amongst their first audience.

"Did they come from Kokand by tarantass?" I whispered to my nearest neighbour, after the first fall of the curtain.

"Oh dear no," he replied, "that would have ruined them. They came in native carts, *arbas*, and took twice as long on the road as you did. As it is we are making a collection for them to defray the expenses of their journey. It is the first troupe that has ever come so far as Namangan. If you look behind you, you will see that the back seats are crowded with Sarts. This is something quite new to them."

I prefer not to criticise the performance of the first play produced in Namangan; it is sufficient to say that the adventurous spirit of the actors and actresses impressed me more even than their acting.

CHAPTER III

MARGELAN AND ANDIJAN

THE journey by tarantass from Namangan to Margelan occupied twelve hours. Besides the post-house, where we halted for tea, there is no place on the way at which a European can stop, even for half-an-hour. As Margelan lies on the same side of the Syr Daria as Kokand, we had once more to trust ourselves to the primitive raft of the country. When we reached the bank, about midday, we found twenty horses already on board, with five men holding their bridles. Five great wheeled *arbas* came next, and left very little room for our tarantass, but plentiful tipping did wonders, and we were soon on board. This time we did not alight. Our *jïgit*, a handsome mounted soldier from Namangan, superintended the unharnessing and stood beside his own horse, patting its neck and encouraging it; it did not like the look of the raft at all, and seemed inclined to be restive. At this crossing the water was much shallower, and three men on horseback waded across with the raft, singing to their horses. Behind us a stalwart fellow was punting; ten more pulled at a rope drawn along the opposite bank.

It was a strange scene, that little spot of Eastern life in the midst of the flat, brown desert stretching for miles in every direction as far as the eye could see, with the silent river flowing through it—silent then, but often rushing like a mountain torrent, an impassable barrier between Namangan and the rest of the civilised world. I looked towards the receding shore; it was easy to count the men upon it, for their white turbans stood out against the brown background in vivid colouring. On the opposite bank we descried many bales of cotton waiting for transport to Moscow. They were coated with hoar-frost. At one moment, just as we were nearing land, there seemed danger of a general stampede among the horses. One man stroked the head of his restive steed and threw his long wadded sleeve over its eyes. Once more I looked back at the shore we had left, but to my astonishment it was no longer visible, a thick white mist had risen like a wall between it and us.

"El hamdu l'Illah!" cried the men in a chorus. "God be praised! We are on the right side of it!" Then they began to call upon Mohammed that he might keep the mist back till they had landed. At last we were as close to the land as the shallowness of the water would allow. The raft stopped, and to my surprise the horses had now to be whipped till they jumped ashore. When they had all taken the necessary leap and thus cleared the way, a couple of

planks were laid across from the bank, which was twelve feet deep, and the wheels of our tarantass were carefully guided along them. To me that seemed the most critical moment of all, for had one of the planks slipped an inch, where should we and our carriage have been? At this juncture the sun burst out from behind the clouds and cleared away the wall of mist in the twinkling of an eye. In another moment the sky had become an azure blue, and the river had taken that soft opal tint which one always associates with the waters of the Nile.

The horses were now put in, our *jigit* presiding with dignity and giving orders all the time. He had on a grey felt coat reaching below his knees, a Cossack cap of astrakhan, a yellow band across his shoulder, and a yellow cording round his neck. Top-boots and a powder-flask completed his outfit. On we went again, the ground we now had to cover resembling in many ways an English moor, dotted at intervals with small shrubs. The road became worse and worse, though it had not rained during our stay at Namangan. The frosted ruts were often eighteen inches deep, and the horses had to step along like wild goats on a crag. At last the animal on my left got all four feet into one of these ruts, and our *jigit* had to dismount and pull the poor creature out, for it was powerless to extricate itself without help. A worse road for horses than the last bit of the way to Margelan I could not imagine.

We heard afterwards that two Russian gentlemen who started out for Namangan that very morning had, after proceeding a little way, considered the journey absolutely impracticable, and abandoned it in consequence. When they heard that we had accomplished it they were amazed. But we had no choice, with the river behind and the ruts before; we were obliged to choose the lesser evil.

It was quite dark as we drove into Old Margelan, but this was not the end of our journey, for we were bound for the Russian town, or New Margelan, and that lay twelve versts (about nine miles) further on. However, our driver had made up his mind to have half-an-hour's rest before going any further, so whether we would or no, our tarantass drew up in front of a native tea-shop. Sart bread, grapes, and little basins of tea were handed in to us as we sat there, and very acceptable they proved, for we had not stopped for refreshments since the middle of the day. Similar fare to that with which we were regaling ourselves was handed to the driver, who had taken out the horses and was soon sitting cross-legged on the matting-covered floor of the tea-shop, in which several petroleum lamps were flickering. Our *jigit* had also dismounted, and was chatting amicably with the few late customers who had strolled into the shop. With the exception of the samovar and the tarantass, there was nothing in sight to remind us that we were on Russian soil.

The shafts of our tarantass rested on the boarding in front of the tea-shop, and we were still wrapped in the rough astrakhan cloaks; I shall never forget that weird half-hour in the flickering lamplight of Old Margelan.

At last the horses were put in, our supper was paid for, and we again took the road. That last piece of the journey was uninteresting because it was too dark to distinguish anything except the gaunt white poles that marked the number of versts, and we began to look forward eagerly to a night's rest after all the jolting of the day. But unfortunately for us our *jigit* was a stranger in New Margelan, and though well-meaning enough, he took us to the *second-best* lodging-house. Now the best was *bad*, as we discovered when another day had dawned, for we packed up our belongings before breakfast and moved into it.

New Margelan is well laid out and has some handsome public buildings. The Russians intend it to become the chief town of Fergana, and the second in importance to Tashkent. It has a public park in which a military band plays at regular intervals. Two battalions are stationed there. There is a good hospital furnished with thirty-five beds; it is under the care of the Margelan Medical Society, which body has drawn some attention of late by preparing in its laboratory certain injections that are thought to be a sure preventive of

leprosy. The Ethnographical Museum only came into existence in 1900, but it already contains much that is of interest to students of Sart life. Dr. Alexander Smirnof, the curator, pointed out to us a collection of children's toys, the popular baby's rattle made from a strip of shaving, a doll carved out of the branch of a tree, and even a monkey on a stick. Here we examined the clumsy locks used on the house doors. A Sart key is something like a horseshoe in appearance. Its one great convenience, which was pointed out to me, is that you can open a door that has been locked, quite as easily without the key as with it! There was also a good model of a Sart dwelling.

The Vice-Governor of Fergana, who resides in New Margelan, M. Nalivkin, is perhaps the greatest living authority on Sart life and literature. He and Madame Nalivkin have devoted their leisure to the study of these people for more than twenty-five years. In 1884 they published in Russian a joint work on the women of Fergana, which has never been translated, and is now out of print. M. Nalivkin kindly presented me with copies of his "History of Kokand" and his "Russian and Persian Dictionary." It was he who organised, in 1884, at the command of the Governor-General, the first school in Tashkent for teaching Russian and arithmetic.

We paid several visits to Old Margelan, in spite



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A SART AND HIS SONS

(Natives of Old Margelan)

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of the tedious distance between the two towns. The mud wall which formerly surrounded the Sart town is fast disappearing, and people are beginning to build outside. M. Nalivkin states that as far back as the year 990 the town was an important stronghold. The Sarts themselves insist that it existed before the time of Alexander. They even took me to see the spot where they believe that illustrious Greek to have been buried. The *tomb* of "Alexander Macedonsky," as the Russians call him, is there indeed. The story goes that when Alexander came to Margelan, the people met him with an offering of a hen and a loaf of bread, which attention pleased him so greatly that afterwards, when he could not remember the name of the town, he called it *Murghi han*, which means "hen and bread." Twenty versts away there are distinct traces of a still older town, called *Bist Takhla*, in reference to the fact that its king ruled over twenty tribes. A river once ran through Bist Takhla, according to native historians, but an earthquake altered its course and destroyed the town.

Andijan, our next halting-place, which is now a heap of ruins, was, till its terrible fate overtook it, one of the most flourishing towns in Russian Turkestan. Its chief interest for English people lies in the fact that it is the terminus of the Transcaspian Railway, and therefore the point at which travellers by the overland route to India are obliged

to exchange the railway carriage for the saddle. It was the starting-point of Sven Hedin when he set out on his adventurous journey towards Lhassa. The Russian colony had sprung up close to the native town, and the two merged into one another. For this reason I prolonged my stay, as my studies of Sart life could be carried on with less fatigue here than in other places. Alas! how little did I think that many of those kindly families, who received me into their houses with such warm hospitality, would lie buried under the ruins of their own walls before the year was out!

Andijan has a longer history than any other Sart town. In 1494 it was the capital of Fergana, besides being the chief town of a province bearing the name of Andijan, which is supposed to have its derivation from the Arab tribal name of Andè. Even at the present day Sarts travelling from no matter what part of Russian Turkestan to Kashgar give themselves out as natives of Andijan, because they feel that Andijan is their most ancient and best known province. It is the chief cotton-growing district in the country. During the last four years the amount of cotton it has supplied for the Moscow markets has increased with almost fabulous rapidity. Further east than Andijan it cannot be grown, for the ground rises steadily, and at Osh, the Russian outpost, snow covers the ground for several months in winter.

The ill-fated town had a population of nearly fifty thousand natives. It contained several fine *medresses*. One of these was built only a few years ago by a wealthy Sart, who had hoped by so doing to make sure of a good reception in Paradise. A Russian lady, who was in Andijan at the time of the earthquake, has sent me in a letter an interesting account of her experiences. "The earthquake of December 16th," she writes, "was so violent that the houses were destroyed at the first vertical shock. We hardly had time to leave our rooms—without thinking of warm clothes—and make our escape into the garden, when the second shock occurred, and five minutes afterwards the third and the most terrifying. We were thrown to the ground, and heard what sounded like boiling water under the ground, and horrible rumbling noises, enough to make one die of terror. . . . I will send you several photographs, but you will recognise nothing; so changed is the town that nothing is to be seen but ruins and streets full of mud. You will find many versions of this disaster in the newspapers, but I ought to explain that they are in error as regards the rain. During the time in question it did not rain, but one breathed with difficulty, as though there was a lack of air. We remained in the garden till evening without thinking of the lightness of our clothes—we were in gowns and slippers only, and our heads were

bare. At six o'clock we went to the station, where they prepared us carriages in which to shelter ourselves till the morning. The shocks were repeated at intervals during the night, the succeeding days, and even up to the present (January 10th). At Tashkent, Margelan, and Kokand there were also earthquakes of the kind one experiences in this country. From Sart records it has been discovered that ninety years ago there was a very severe earthquake, in which many towns were destroyed. . . . The town, with its *medresses*, is entirely destroyed. The village called Kokand village, twenty-four versts away, has buried beneath itself all its inhabitants and live stock, and is supposed to have been the centre of the earthquake. More than seven hundred and fifty corpses were counted there, and the official estimate of all the victims is above seven thousand, but it is to be presumed that there will be more. Many people have lost all they possessed, but at the same time are thanking a kind Providence for having preserved their lives—the greatest blessing after all."[1]

. . . . . .

The writer of this volume has herself to thank Providence that she was led, by some good angel, to abandon her intention of revisiting Andijan at the very time in which this catastrophe occurred.

[1] This letter was published in the *Times*, February 6, 1903.

BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER IV

MY FIRST VISIT TO BOKHARA

WHEN my brother and I visited Bokhara in the autumn of 1896, we were certainly younger and perhaps more foolish than we are to-day. How else could we have dared to visit that sacred city without having first obtained a permit from the Russian Foreign Office? Well, there was a spice of adventure in that visit which was entirely lacking when I came again, nearly six years afterwards, armed with a permit direct from the Czar. When his Imperial Majesty Nicholas II. reads this account of our youthful audacity, I trust that he will do so with a pardoning smile. We had been warned that a permit would have to be shown as we stepped on board the steamer which crossed the Caspian from Baku, so we avoided Baku altogether, and crossed from Petrovsk. We went on board in the evening. The passage occupied twenty-four hours, so there was plenty of time for our fellow-passengers to question us as to our permit. The captain asked my brother point-blank at lunch the next day: "Of course you are provided with a permit?"

"I have all the papers that we shall require," answered my brother loftily, and he clapped his right hand carelessly upon his breast-pocket, which was indeed stuffed with papers.

A Russian colonel approached us amicably on deck a little later, and said, in the course of a pleasant conversation in French (at that time neither of us knew a word of Russian), that it would be of great interest to him to see our permit.

"Who is that gentleman in the long astrakhan cloak?" asked my brother, deftly turning the conversation.

"Oh, that is the Chief of the Russian Police at Bokhara," replied the colonel; "he is returning to his duties after a summer holiday in the Caucasus. You had better make his acquaintance, as he will have to conduct you round Bokhara if you stop there."

The subject of these remarks now approached, and we lost no time in making friends with him. He proved most agreeable, and offered to lend us a book on Bokhara if we stopped there.

"I suppose you are coming to Bokhara?" he added.

"We may, or we may not," replied my brother dubiously, and the subject dropped.

Among the passengers were several young Russian ladies, who turned out to be school teachers returning to their posts at Askhabad and Samarkand. From them we learned that Central Asia, besides being the seat of the most fanatical

followers of Islam, was also the seat of a flourishing European colony with High Schools for Girls, quite equal to anything of the sort in our own country. To me this was a revelation indeed.

How these young ladies enjoyed themselves! how they frizzed their hair before the mirror in the ladies' cabin! and how they flirted with the handsome officers bound for more distant and less civilised stations, where there was to be no amusement in life beyond the delectable game of *Vint*, a version of which we now call "Bridge."

As the train came into the states of New Bokhara, two days after we had landed on the farther side of the Caspian, the Chief of Police in the long cloak came up and offered to show us the way to the Russian Embassy; but my brother, who had already stepped out on to the platform, declined with thanks, and said that we had decided not to break our journey till we got to Samarkand. He then rejoined me in the train, where I had just finished packing up our things and was preparing to alight. We resumed our journey.

It was on our return that we stopped at Bokhara. On that occasion there was no one at the station to offer us any assistance. We got into a droshky and drove at once to Old Bokhara, a distance of about four miles. No one asked us any questions, and we settled down comfortably in the only caravanserai that is fit to receive Europeans. It

was kept by a German-speaking Russian. Five delightful days we spent there, roaming through the bazaar, dining with hospitable Sarts to whom we had brought introductions from their friends in Samarkand, picking up all sorts of curios, visiting the rich Jews of the Ghetto, and having what our transatlantic friends would call "a real good time." I believe that since the time of Vambéry no other English-speaking travellers have ever explored Bokhara under such exceptional circumstances. We were not a "conducted party," we were troubled with no guides, no mounted police, no servants of the state, we were free to follow our own sweet will. The only Russian who knew that we were there was the keeper of the caravanserai, and he "lay low." We not only explored the town by day, we also wandered forth in the blue light of an unclouded moon, and threaded our way fearlessly through the inkiest of shadows, for there were no street lamps in those days, and where some projecting wall came between us and the moon our path was black as night, and I being a girl would clutch my brother's arm and remember for an instant that we were not under Russian protection. Had some fanatic taken it into his head to murder us he could have done it safely, for the discovery of our bodies would only have proved that we had been foolish enough to venture into the heart of Islam without a permit, and without a

guard. Once we paid an evening call on a student in one of the *medresses*. A friendly mullah who was our companion on that occasion introduced us with much ceremony to the young man, the son of a wealthy landowner in a distant part of the Khanate.

"What are you studying?" my brother asked in Arabic.

"I am just now engaged in the study of the seventh heaven and the ninth universe," replied the student with dignity.

As I did not speak Arabic, I looked round the room, and counted about fifty small teapots in the niches on the wall. The youth was evidently fond of entertaining his friends, if only with tea. On the wall was a map of the world, on which Bokhara was written very large. After looking for some time I also discovered Petersburg and even London!

Our visits to Bokharan houses were especially interesting to me, because, as a woman, I was permitted to pay my respects to the ladies, while my brother chatted with the gentlemen in the outer courts. Though they could not converse with me as they were able to do on my second visit, they were delighted to show me their clothes, their jewellery, and last but not least their babies. On the evening of our fifth day there, I was packing my valise to return to Samarkand by the night train, when I heard hurried steps and the clanking of a sword outside my window. I looked up and saw our

friend the Chief of the Police talking excitedly with my brother. I went out to see what was the matter.

"You must leave at once," he cried, hardly bowing as I came up; "you ought not to have entered the town till you had called on the Russian Political Agent and shown your permit. I must take you to him at once!"

"Calm yourself, my dear sir," replied my brother; "we have sufficiently explored Bokhara during our five days' stay, and we are leaving in half-an-hour."

We drove in fine style from the Old Bokhara to the New. Four mounted policemen escorted our droshky, and the Chief of the Police rode ahead to clear our way. Within a few steps of the Russian Embassy our escort left us, but not before the Chief of Police had extracted from us a solemn promise that we would not return to Old Bokhara till we had called on the Political Agent and shown him our permit. As we had no permit to show, it seemed to us superfluous to call upon Russia's representative, but we merely left our cards, and then, getting into the train for Samarkand as soon as it came up, returned to that equally interesting though totally different town, where we stayed till our return to Europe. So much for my first visit to Bokhara. "You have been playing the game of bluff!" remarked Lord Curzon when my brother told him the story.

CHAPTER V

MY SECOND VISIT TO BOKHARA

"The officer who rode up to my lord had, it appeared, said to him that he was not under arrest, but under surveillance; and to request him not to ride abroad that day. My lord replied that riding was good for his health; that if the captain chose to accompany him he was welcome; and it was then that he made a bow and they cantered away together."—*The History of Henry Esmond.*

IT was in February 1902 that I found myself for the second time in Bokhara. On this occasion it was not my brother, but my mother who accompanied me. The Russian Political Agent was lying ill in his bed a victim to asthma, and it was thought doubtful whether he would ever recover. A young gentleman recently arrived from Russia, who was acting temporarily in his place, told me that a Sart doctor, who had been called in when all the Russian physicians had failed to relieve the patient, had prescribed a cup of hare's blood to be drunk warm from the body of the live animal. Even this extraordinary remedy had failed to bring the sufferer any relief. Our informant offered politely to assist us in any way that was in his power.

"There is no place where you can stay in Old Bokhara," he added, "you will have to drive in

every day, or go by train; we have a railway, you know."

I remembered the caravanserai.

"Is there not a rough sort of caravanserai in which we could spend a few days?" I asked. "The journey backwards and forwards would be very tiring."

"Well, yes," he said after a pause, "but Europeans never stay there. If you wish to do so, however, I will telephone to the man and tell him you are coming. You will find the people of Bokhara extremely fanatical," he went on; "we should have a war with them if we were not very cautious. You cannot expect to be invited into their houses; it is quite different here from any of the towns you have visited in Russian territory. It will not be safe for you to stir without a *jigit*. I will place a trustworthy man at your disposal, and he will take you about."

The trustworthy man in question was accordingly sent with us to Old Bokhara. We lived very comfortably in the selfsame caravanserai, and fared sumptuously on tinned dainties bought in the town, as we did not relish the meat. Here is a paragraph from my diary: "I ate to-day strawberry jam and cheese, sardines, tinned cherries, pomegranates, melon, and chocolate, besides bread and pickled cucumber."

One of our first expeditions was to the recently established branch of the Moscow Bank, for which we were furnished with a letter of credit.

"Oh, you are under surveillance," said the banker, as he accompanied us politely to the door, and caught sight of our tall *jigit* in his robe of many colours and his spotless white turban.

"What makes you think that?" I asked.

"Your *jigit* is an official in the Cushbeggi's service," he replied—"he has on *boots;* if he were a servant he would wear goloshes."

Servant or no, the *jigit* was useful, for I made him carry my camera on all our outings, and he held my hat while I took my photographs, and cleared the donkeys and camels out of our way when we walked in the streets. Still I knew from experience that Bokhara would have been pleasanter without him. As for the Bokhara of seven years ago, the Bokhara of Vambéry, Schuyler, and Curzon, it was gone for ever. The town was now like a nut from which the kernel had been extracted. How thankful I felt that I had seen that kernel. Like the campanile of Venice, Bokhara the Noble is to-day a thing of the past. In the bazaars that once had not their equal, there is hardly a booth that has not procured its wares direct from Moscow. I spent hours in searching for curios that I could take to friends in England, but there was literally nothing Bokharan left except a few knives. Even the Ghetto had changed, and the rich Jews by whom I had been entertained six years before were now living in Russian-built houses in Tashkent and Kokand. Through the kindness of

the Russian colonists, opportunities were given me of conversing with some of the most influential Sarts of the Khanate. It was somewhat embarrassing when one and all eagerly demanded what were my *first impressions* of Bokhara the Noble. With eager eyes fixed upon my face, I often came very near betraying the fact that this was not my first visit. One day an Armenian gentleman put the question to me direct.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "have you not seen Bokhara before?"

My answer was a look of innocent surprise, which had the effect of making my interlocutor feel rather foolish, and he said no more.

On visiting the fortress prison, which may be described as a mud edition of Agrippa's Pantheon, I observed that it was much cleaner, as to the floor and the general state of the prisoners, than it had been on my former visit; but when I raised my eyes to the walls and the roof I saw dust and cobwebs which would have said they remembered me could they but have spoken. One of the prisoners was having his head shaved, and another was contentedly peeling an apple while he waited for his turn. It was through the influence of M. Lessar, formerly the Czar's ambassador to London, that the horrible underground dungeon, made so famous by Vereschagin's masterpiece in the Moscow gallery, was done away with. M. Lessar was at one time Russian Political Agent at Bokhara.

The Amir was at Kerminé preparing for his approaching visit to St. Petersburg, so we did not see him. The Cushbeggi sent his next in office to welcome us, and an entertainment was prepared in our honour, but the most interesting memory I carried away with me was that of the sweet face of one of the Cushbeggi's ladies; I think she was his chief's wife. The dear old lady took both my hands and pressed them to her heart in token of sincerest welcome. Then in queenly tones she commanded several of the younger ladies to perform a Tajik dance for our especial benefit, and very gracefully they did it, waving their tambourines above their heads, and reminding us in their movements of the castonette dancers in Spain. It is only in Bokhara and Khiva that one meets with what I may call the Sart aristocracy. In Russian territory native rank and titles have disappeared. In Bokhara the ladies of rank resort once a week to a public bath to which women of the lower classes are not admitted. It is situated, strange to say, at the foot, or rather inside the foot of the world-renowned criminal tower. A more novel economy of space I never met with. One day when the bath was filled with ladies, we went in to have a chat with some of them, leaving our gay *jigit* at the door. Unhappily I had my camera under my arm, and that caused some commotion, but I soon managed to quiet suspicion by returning to the *jigit* and leaving the dangerous

machine in his charge. There was a great display of jewellery and silks of every hue, and I picked out more than one beautiful face in the dim light. Many young mothers had brought their babies with them, and a number of elderly women, with their faces enveloped in fine white muslin, were looking after the little ones in the outer room while the mothers bathed. There was naturally much more quiet and order than in the bath at Samarkand, which was open to all classes. Every movement of the fair bathers was dignified; they might have been assisting at a religious service.

The women of Bokhara have less freedom and less education than those in Russian territory. Not long since, when a wealthy citizen was asked how often he conversed with his wife, he replied—

"About three or four times a year. Why should I talk to her? She is an uneducated and ignorant person."

Yet even in Bokhara it is not a rare thing for a woman to give her husband a good drubbing if she suspects him of inconstancy. If a woman poisons her husband, she is shot by command of the Amir. If a man poisons his wife, he has his throat cut.

During Ramazan a mullah calls to prayer from the top of the tower twice a day, five minutes after sunrise and sunset. Every Friday, at fifteen minutes past twelve, three mullahs mount to the top and sing out the call to prayer in unison. The last criminal

to be thrown from this tower was tied up in a sack; they dragged his body out of the sack and left it for weeks in a corner of the street. This occurred early in the eighties, and I quote from an eye-witness.

The present Emir has much tact; he gave in gracefully to Russia, and it is in consequence of this that he enjoys the title of lieutenant-general in one of the Cossack regiments. He is the youngest son of the late Amir. The eldest is at present in Peshawar, and two others are kept under surveillance in Bokhara, where they receive a certain number of roubles annually for their personal expenses. The heir to the throne is said to be more of a European than an Oriental.

The Cushbeggi is a kind-hearted man; it is owing to his efforts that a home has been opened in Bokhara for the destitute poor. This institution is supported entirely by the native government, without any help from Russia.

There are many middle-aged Sarts in Bokhara to-day who can remember the time when Turkoman slave-dealers used regularly to expose their Persian captives for sale in the market. A man usually fetched the equivalent of £30, and a woman £60. In the year 1864 the Russians took Khiva, and liberated nearly forty thousand slaves, among whom there were twenty-six Russians. Three of them were women, and as they had children they preferred to stay, and did not return to Russia.

CHAPTER VI

AMONG THE TEKKE TURKOMANS

IT was on our homeward journey that we visited Merv, Askhabad, and Bairam Ali. Askhabad, now the chief town of Transcaspia, was once a Turkoman encampment — *Eshkabad*, or "the town of love." It was here that I paid my first visit to a Turkoman *kibitka*, which had been erected in the corner of a garden belonging to a Russian official. It was a cold, frosty day, and we were nothing loath to join the cosy family party that clustered round the wood fire, and thaw our frozen fingers while the smoke curled upwards to its only exit, a small hole in the roof; that roof, by the way, was nothing more than a covering of thick felt laid over a skeleton hut of willow withes. The mother held a black-eyed babe in her arms, and several other children belonging to another wife made up the group. Presently the father lifted the piece of felt that served as a door, and came and stood behind his wife. Being a trusted servant of the Russian family under whose protection we had come to visit him, he was anxious to show the hospitality of his race, and begged us to let him prepare some tea.

"That baby came into the world just after the cold weather set in," said Madame H. "Until it was born the mother refused to lie down, though it took all the strength of a powerful female neighbour to support her in a standing position. She was true to the time-honoured custom of her race. It was a bitter day," she continued, "and as the poor creature's teeth chattered with the cold, I sent for an old coat to throw over her shoulders. It was not much use after all, for as soon as my back was turned her husband appropriated it for his own wear."

There had been difficulty about deciding on a name for the child. The father had begged his Russian master to choose one.

"I think Mohammed would do," said the colonel, but the father shook his head; then, after a little reflection, he said, "Well, it was snowing yesterday, so the boy shall be called 'It Snows.'"

As soon as "It Snows" was born, a neighbour had set about making a cake, while the father had rushed out to tell his friends the good news and invite them to a feast. He had returned home with as many nuts and sweets as he could carry. The cake made, the useful neighbour had seated herself upon the ground, and, holding the child between her upturned toes, proceeded to wash its face with oil and mud, mixed with native soap.

The Turkomans, though their Mohammedanism is

very lax, have a great horror of pigs. They firmly believe that a man who has touched one of these animals cannot enter heaven within a certain number of years after the event. One of Colonel H.'s servants finding that a certain mullah had taken a fancy to his wife, got some bristles from a wild boar and stuck them in her head-dress. The mullah ceased from that moment to trouble her with his attentions.

The next day we visited a large encampment several miles distant. The chief came out to welcome us. He was responsible to the Russians for the good behaviour of all the families in that particular encampment, and wore round his neck the usual insignia of office, a gilt chain and medal. He was much richer and lived in better style than his neighbours. His *kibitka* was hung with valuable Penjeh carpets and saddlebags, and wonderfully comfortable they made it. Musicians were called for, and we were soon listening to music excruciating to European ears. One sang to a native guitar, while another played on a peculiar kind of pipe. The music soon attracted a great crowd, but as there was only room for a limited number of people inside the *kibitka*, the people who could not possibly squeeze in began to lift up bits of the felt covering, and leaning with all their weight upon the frail walls, made them tremble so that I thought every minute the whole thing would collapse upon our heads. The



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TURKOMAN WOMEN MAKING A CARPET

windows thus made let in a current of piercingly cold air, and wherever we looked black eyes seemed to be peering down upon us. The music and tea being over, we asked if we might be introduced to the ladies of the encampment, whereupon their menfolk went in search of them, and they soon appeared in such numbers that there was not an inch of standing room left, and many had to stay outside. They all wore masses of weighty silver jewellery. The most remarkable of their ornaments were heavy silver breastplates studded with agates. Very poor women, if they cannot possess themselves of solid silver, will content themselves with imitation. The candle sockets off a Russian Christmas-tree had been thankfully received and sewn on to the clothes of a woman who could not afford to buy anything better. The women's caps were thickly covered with heavy silver buttons, sewn on. Their feet were bare, in spite of the fact that the ground outside was covered with snow.

Of all Mohammedan women, the Turkomans seem to enjoy the greatest freedom; they go where they like, unveiled, and mix freely with the men from childhood onwards. They seldom have much pretension to good looks. Those of pure Turkoman blood are the ugliest, and have a Mongol type of face. The better-looking among them are invariably descended from Persian slaves, and consequently take a low rank in Turkoman society. A Turkoman

of pure blood will never choose such a woman for his wife, for to him she is nothing but a slave, or the child of one.

The Turkomans are a proud people. The poorest urchin among them is born with a fiery pride of race; if you offer him a tip for some small service rendered he declines it with an offended flash of the eye and a movement of his well-set head which tells you more plainly than words that despite his rags he is a gentleman.

No Russian official ever dreams of giving orders to a Turkoman servant. He asks him as a favour to do this or that, and meets in return with the obedience of a lamb. Whereas servility is half the character of a Sart there is not a grain of it in the Turkoman, yet a simpler-minded people does not exist. The wild foe has become the trusted subject, and there is a mutual esteem between conqueror and conquered that is pleasing to behold.[1] The little museum at Gëok Teppe, which contains the trophies of Skobeleff's victory, contains also the trophies of Turkoman bravery, and all has been done that could be done to show that Russia admires bravery, even if it be that of a vanquished foe.

We spent a morning in the native market at Merv. The first thing that attracted our attention was a

[1] "It would be well if nations and races could communicate their qualities; but in practice when they look upon each other, they have an eye to nothing but defects."—*R. L. Stevenson.*

number of long bars of native soap selling at eight kopecks (2d.) a bar. Russians have found it better than their own for washing linen, and buy it from the Turkomans in quantities for that purpose. Close by a hat business was going on; each sheepskin hat or red skull-cap was suspended on a stick the other end of which had been stuck firmly in the ground; a cap is always worn under the sheepskin hat. Then we passed on to the carpet-sellers, who sat on the ground with their rugs piled up on either side of them. Fresh rugs were continually arriving on the backs of camels from distant encampments, and we stood for some time watching them unfolded. Considering myself somewhat of a connoisseur in carpets, I had looked forward to picking up a rug or two here, but alas! as rug after rug was unfolded, the sad truth was impressed upon me that I had come too late. Cheap work and cheap designs abounded, but the Turkoman carpet of world-wide renown was not there. Later in the day when we dined with the Governor, his daughters took me for a tour of inspection round their handsomely furnished house, and showed me the carpets they prized the most. There were not many I should have cared to buy. Two subsequent visits to the chief carpet warehouse at Merv resulted in our purchasing a couple of small Penjeh rugs, the only ones of their kind that we met with.

We stopped to look next at a bootseller's wares,

and were interested to notice that unlike the Sart, who sports heelless boots and goloshes, the Turkoman has heels to his boots and also to his slippers, while the toes of both turn up in something of a Chinese fashion. This must be one of the remnants of his Mongolian origin. No stockings and few socks are worn, but we saw long strips of coarse material being sold for winding round feet and legs.

Horses stood about in groups while their masters, who had evidently come in from a distance, were making their purchases. Each animal had its back covered with a heavy piece of felt. Turkoman horses live out of doors, they are never kept in stables. One result of their backs always being covered is that they lose a great deal of their hair. Some riders had brought bundles of hay on the front of their saddles, and were selling it in wisps to the townsfolk. The silversmiths were selling their jewellery in roughly erected booths. All their wares lay on the ground upon a spread-out handkerchief. The bracelets of solid silver must have weighed pounds; they were heavy even to lift, as we examined them; I should be sorry to have to wear one. On an ordinary woman's arm they would reach three-parts of the way between the wrist and the elbow; they were only sold in pairs. The necklaces might appropriately be described as collars, suitable for a mastiff or a large greyhound. To carry these, a Turkoman woman should have

the strength of a horse. The solid silver jewellery that a man buys for his wife often represents a good part of his capital. He cannot afford to purchase in a hurry. A great many cups of tea must be drunk, and every bystander must give his opinion before a bargain can be struck. The jeweller is quite aware of this, and has a number of little tea-pots ready for his customers.

We were still strolling about the market when all at once, without any apparent reason, everybody jumped up and rushed in one direction. If there had been any thieves about, now would have been their opportunity. As it was, I made use of the occasion to peep into one of the numerous carpet sacks in which the men had brought their goods; it was full of plump ducks. When the owner returned I discovered that the irresistible attraction had been nothing more than two men fighting.

The chief of the district took us with him to the "law courts," where a case of theft was about to be tried. A camel had been stolen, and six Turkomans of good standing were present as a kind of jury to judge the case. We watched the witnesses and the offender brought in and examined, and heard the sentence of six months' imprisonment. The prisoner was not a Turkoman, but a Sart from Bokhara, hence his light punishment. He was to be expelled from Russian territory on his release. The jury wore only their red skull-caps, and had a

comparatively meek appearance without their sheepskin headgear. After seeing them thus I was more than ever convinced that the proverbially fierce look of the Turkoman is chiefly due to his sheepskin cap, with its shaggy wool hanging over his piercing black eyes.

We drove several miles out of Merv to visit a village or winter encampment called Tegelik Mejek. The chief had four wives, each of whom dwelt in a *kibitka* of her own. He had also a comfortable *kibitka* for himself, made very snug with handsome carpets. We visited each of the ladies in turn; the youngest had only been married a few months; she was sixteen years of age; her husband had paid a thousand roubles for her. Our host set before us some preserved fruit called *ali buchara;* it grows in Persia as well as in Bokhara. When picked from the tree it is said to resemble "a plum without a skin, or a strawberry without a stone." There is a pretty custom among the Turkomans that when a guest takes leave of his host the latter springs on to his horse and goes part of the way with his guest, and we also were escorted on our way.

We next visited a Turkoman mosque, with a minaret and a *medresse* attached to it. They were built entirely of mud. The *medresse* had no lecture-room; it consisted simply of a number of mud-built *kibitkas* surrounding a square; their walls were

a foot and a half thick. Above each entrance was a tiny square window, covered with parchment in place of glass. The reader will perhaps be surprised to learn that a nomadic race should possess even a mosque or a *medresse* which is not portable, but this is just one of the points in which the Turkomans differ from the Kirgiz. They are not for ever roving without a plan like most of the latter, but have their regular winter and summer encampments which, once chosen, are resorted to for many years in succession. It is thus that they are better enabled to take up agriculture. The Kirgiz, on the other hand, who are always on the move, devote themselves mainly to cattle-breeding.

We stopped on our way back to Merv to see how soap was made on the steppe. Near one of the encampments there was an enormous vat with a fire under it and a number of smaller vats scattered about near at hand. The ingredients used were sheep's fat, potash, salt and an herb called *choghon*, which is said to grow only in the Turkoman steppe. The soap thus made has remarkable cleansing properties, and is preferred by the Russians to their own for laundry purposes. Nearly every *kibitka* had its own watch-dog, which made a great noise and had to be held back as we approached.

From Merv we retraced our steps to Bairam Ali, whence we could drive out to see the wonderful

ruins of ancient Merv, about which Gibbon wrote: "The Antiochia founded by the Greeks in Hyrcania still existed in the days of Timour under the name of Merve."[1] *To-day there are still forty miles of ruins that have never been properly explored by archæologists.* The tombs of the two standard-bearers of Ali are still in fairly good preservation, so also is the mosque of Sultan Sanjar, the hero of the Seljuks. Unhappily the Turkomans, who have a practice of making pilgrimages to these holy ruins, think it right that each pilgrim should pull out a couple of bricks from their lower walls, that he may lean them up against each other in memory of his visit to these monuments of Islam, so they are not likely to remain standing many years longer. The beautifully sculptured tomb of one of the standard-bearers has had a great piece hacked out of it; this recent act of vandalism was, I am told, the work of an English tourist. It is thought that

[1] "Its glories and sieges and sacks excited the eloquence of chroniclers and the wonderment of pilgrims. Successively a satrapy of Darius . . . a city and colony of Alexander; a province of the Parthians whither Orodes transported the 10,000 Roman soldiers whom he took prisoners in his famous victory over Crassus; the site of a Christian bishopric; an Arabian capital (where at the end of the eighth century, Mokannah, the veiled prophet of Khorasan, kindled the flame of schism), the seat of power of a Seljuk dynasty, and the residence and last resting-place of Alp Arslan and Sultan Sanjar; a prey to the awful scourge of the Mongol, and an altar for the human hecatombs of Jenghiz Khan; a frontier outpost of Persia; a bone of armed contention between Bokhara and Khiva; a Turkoman encampment; and a Russian town."—*Curzon's "Russia in Central Asia."*



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RUINS OF ANCIENT MERV

during its most flourishing period Merv had a population of at least a million souls. There is a legend that the canals by which the town was watered, and of which there are still traces, were supplied with water from a mountain reservoir, and that a certain noble had the management of it. One day the sultan carried off the noble's beautiful daughter, and her father in revenge gave the reservoir into the hands of the Persians, who cut off the entire water supply. A drought ensued, and no effort of its inhabitants could save the fated town. Since the Russians came they have spent millions of roubles in trying to make new reservoirs, but their efforts have met with little success. The Merv oasis is surrounded on all sides by a desert which, in the old days, was a better protection to the Turkomans than the strongest of fortifications could possibly have been. This steppe, as the Russians call it, is cut up by caravan routes, which have for ages been connecting-links between Khiva, Bokhara and Persia. The Turkomans, like the Kirgiz, are divided into clans, which again are subdivided into tribes and families. My personal acquaintance with them has been confined, so far, to the Tekke races; all the Turkomans are Sunnites. There is a widespread belief that their desert was once the bottom of an inland sea, comprising within its boundaries the Caspian as well as the Aral Sea. Seals have

been found in the Caspian; this suggests a connection between it and the Polar seas. No seals have ever been found in either the Black Sea or the Mediterranean. For miles I saw the ground covered with a white powder, which turned out to be pure salt.

At Bairam Ali, the next station to Merv, the Emperor of Russia has a private estate covering a hundred and twenty thousand desatines. It is superintended by M. Spiridon Tolstoy, one of the Life Guards who stood on the steps of the throne at the coronation of Alexander III. A palatial residence was built and furnished for him in 1902 out of the Emperor's own pocket, and he receives a salary of nine thousand roubles yearly. The labourers on the estate are all Turkomans, who are fast being reclaimed to the ways of civilisation and learning the useful art of agriculture in place of the brigandage in which they no longer have an opportunity to excel; their number on the estate exceeds three thousand. There is a hospital, under the care of a Russian doctor with two trained assistants. The doctor, who escorted us round the neat wards and showed us his operating-room, with its glazed walls and all the latest improvements, looked somewhat like a *chef de cuisine* in his long white pinafore. In time there will also be a church; as it is, a church railway-carriage visits the estate occasionally. The estate already



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TURKOMAN FAMILY, BAIRAM ALI

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boasts of shops, factories and a bazaar. Some of the employés are Afghans, which is not surprising when one remembers how close Merv is to Afghanistan. While we were driving round the estate with our kind hostess, Madame Tolstoy, we came upon a party of Afghans making bread pretty much after the Sart fashion—which I have described elsewhere—only that they kneaded the paste on a cushion. Some of these men had actually decorated their upper garments with buttons from the coats of English soldiers! I saw three of them at least. India seemed near indeed.

The fertility of the Merv oasis is almost incredible. From soil that had not been touched for more than a hundred and fifty years, two hundred puds of fruit were produced on the estate the first year from two and a half acres. Even the richest American soil cannot beat that. A gentleman who spoke a little English described it to me as "an awful crop." A Russian has charge of the jam manufactory, where thousands of tins of apricot and strawberry jam are turned out every year. I can say from experience that no English jam can hold a candle to it. The fruit retains its shape, its colour and its flavour.

A Russian gentleman, M. Vickouline, manages the cotton-cleaning department. He has introduced the latest improvements in English machinery. Outside the buildings are to be seen the mountains of cotton-seed to which I have already alluded.

In summer the heat is often 55° Reamur, and in winter it is so cold that the thermometer stands at 28° for a month at a time. In the cold weather, both Russians and natives are exposed to attacks of what they call "yellow fever," which is almost always fatal on the second or third day. Its victims are nearly always people who have recently suffered from malarial fever.

The Merv territory was defended against the Russians by four Khans, after their nominal surrender in 1884; they even built fresh forts. One of the Khans was a child at the time. His mother, a woman of strong character, saw how useless it was to hold out any longer and used her influence with the three other Khans so well that they were brought round to her opinion, and peace was confirmed. The Emperor Alexander was so pleased when he heard the story that he assigned a pension to her and her son for life. The old lady is still living; she had the honour of being presented to the late Emperor when he passed through Baku. The Empress gave her some valuable jewels. Her name is Gulgimi Bai.

Young horses grow up with the children of the family, and some think this the reason why they are so remarkably intelligent. As I have said before, such a thing as a stable is unknown. The special breed for which the desert was once famed has almost disappeared. The owner of the finest

Turkoman horse I met with was a Russian gentleman in Tashkent; my friend has since sent me a photograph of that beautiful animal.

On our return to Merv we were delighted to hear that an invitation to a Turkoman wedding awaited us. About ten in the morning we drove out to the village where the bride lived. I may describe it as a settlement of beehives full of excited women. What a buzzing their voices made! Every available scrap of jewellery was displayed on this occasion. On her right hand each woman had a heavy silver thumb-ring, while numerous silver amulets hooked into her hair tinkled like Swiss cowbells at her every movement; on her breast she wore the agate-studded breastplate of which I have spoken. Every face looked happy and expectant. We were taken into a large *kibitka*, and ate *pilau* seated on handsome silk mattresses. We all partook of one big dish, with European spoons, while our host, the bride's father, brought out one handkerchief after another filled with nuts, sweets, apples, oranges and sugar. We were not expected to put the sugar into our tea, but to eat it separately. One old lady being rather far from the dish I handed her my spoon when I had finished; as she helped herself to *pilau* the whole company was convulsed with merriment, for it was the first time in her life that she had handled a spoon.

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Allah knows" replied one of the men.

There was feasting in all the *kibitkas* at the same time; from where I sat I could see bowls of steaming *pilau* being carried past. The bride and her young lady friends had had theirs an hour earlier. Six carts were drawn up outside their tent. It is only quite recently that the Russian cart has taken the place of the Turkoman camel at these festivals. At a given signal the girls rushed out of their *kibitka* and hopped on to the carts like so many kittens, laughing merrily all the time. The drivers, who were already seated, now smacked their whips and the six horses started off at a gallop; another cart drove up to take the bride. We saw the mother step forward to receive the price that had to be paid for her. Three women then rushed into the *kibitka* and soon reappeared carrying what looked like a large silk-covered bolster suitable for a double bed. They bundled it into the cart, in a horizontal position. That was the bride! Two women jumped in beside her and off she went; but a shout from the men soon stopped the cart. I now heard that as only half the money had been paid she could not proceed. Then a man from the crowd stepped up to the mother and put a silver coin into her hand. She looked at it, and being apparently satisfied, let the cart go on. I was then told that the bride must return to her parents after twenty days, as not all of the money had yet been paid.

We got into our carriage and followed the bridal party to the adjoining village, where we found the girls all crowded into another *kibitka* with the bride in their midst. She pretended to be very shy, and it was difficult to make her show her face. Outside the men had formed a wide circle, and stood four or five deep to watch a wrestling-match between the youths of the encampment. The struggles of each couple of barefooted wrestlers were followed with breathless interest; shouts applauded every hero who succeeded in tripping up his opponent and bringing him to the ground with a crash. They wrestled each with one hand on the other's shoulder and one on his hip. The struggle began with slow, deliberate pressure and very little movement; this exhibition of quiet force was the most impressive part of it. The victors were rewarded with bright silk handkerchiefs which were handed to them by the umpire, who kept order with a stick in his hand. None of the women were present. A horse-race came next, but we could not stay to witness it.

At dinner that evening I had for my neighbour the military doctor stationed at Merv, and it was from him I learned that the eye-disease which I had noticed so frequently among the Turkomans was not cataract but *trachoma*, a disease of the eyelid resulting from the smoky atmosphere of the *kibitkas*. If it is not treated in time the eyeball becomes white and blindness ensues. It is very contagious and is

passed on from one member of a family to another through their habit of eating and drinking from the same vessel.

The river Murgab overflowed its banks in the spring of 1896, and the Russians, fearing lest it might cause serious devastation, dammed up its course. The result was that the water spread over a considerable tract of country and formed marshes. From these marshes a poisonous miasma arose and a terrible mortality from malarial fever ensued. It is no exaggeration to say that the population of New Merv was diminished by one-third in consequence. Many families who were not themselves attacked preferred to leave the place; even in 1901 and 1902 there were victims, though the marshes have long since dried up. It is not considered safe for a Russian child to remain in Merv between the months of May and September; even the soldiers stationed there are removed.

From Merv we travelled back to Krasnovodsk without again breaking our journey. Passing through Askhabad we had the great pleasure of a last chat and handshake with those of our Russian friends who had been able to come to the station to bid us God-speed on our homeward way.

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